“A Meeting in Munich”

a rhetorical reenactment play

by Paul D. Patton

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LIST OF CHARACTERS

REVEREND GEORG SCHULTZ, late twenties to sixties. Dutifully driven, loves the congregants. Bright. Afraid of the personal and professional effects of a major division in his church. He is unsure of what to do and see himself as congregational mediator/moderator.

ELFRIEDE KOLES, nervous mother, concerned about her children

HELMUT SCHWALM, outspoken, critical of regime

MARTIN BERNHARDT, Stately, courteous, articulate--can be any age. Smartly dressed, not necessarily a Party member, but policy defender.

MARGARET LUBOSCH, the leading opponent of Party policy in the congregation, at least the most vocal. Respected by most. Mother of two children who cling to her through a good portion of the debate.

JAN BOREMAN, wise congregant, even-tempered

KARL ROSENBURG, opponent of Party policy; can be any adult age.

GRETCHEL SCHELLENG, a Party supporter.

RUDOLF SCHRUPP, Storm Trooper, dressed in uniform, mid-twenties or older; hard-lined Party man.

FRAU DETTMAN, elderly woman, endeared by the congregation; she is soft spoken and frail in appearance.

OTTO DORNBURGER, a Party supporter.

EVA LUBOSCH, daughter of Margaret; shy, she could be from six to eleven years old. Eva also has a younger sister, EMMA, who sits with Eva and their mother.

FREDERICK SCHELLENG, Son of Gretchen, same age as Eva.

THE SETTING: Lutheran Church in southern German province of Bavaria. The Nazi party has ordered all youth groups of the state church to be assimilated into the Hitler Youth organization. The meeting seeks to determine what the church’s response should be. The discussion should be preceded by the Lutheran hymn, “A Mighty Fortress is Our God.”

TIME: December 1933
The following Power Point slides should be shown as noted in the script.

**SLIDE ONE**  
January 30, 1939  
Adolf Hitler before the Reichstag, defending his treatment of Jews and the German churches, eight months before the German invasion of Poland and the beginning of World War II

“Meeting in Munich” should begin with an actor performing excerpts of Adolph Hitler’s January 30th, 1939 speech before the German Reichstag, on the sixth anniversary of his election as Reich’s chancellor. One minute before the end of the speech—Hitler starts mentioning his role as a “prophet”—THEME MUSIC should begin and play through the subsequent slides.

With the end of Hitler’s speech…

**SLIDE TWO**  
Six years earlier:  
January 30, 1933  
Adolf Hitler elected chancellor

**SLIDE THREE**  
For months various Nazi Party organizations had encouraged members to attend church in uniform and enter the sanctuary in formation

**SLIDE FOUR**  
December 19, 1933  
Reich Bishop Ludwig Muller  
Orders the church youth groups, called the “Evangelical Youth Organization” dismantled and reorganized as “Hitler Youth.”

**SLIDE FIVE**  
The order aroused the ire of many in congregations throughout the Reich.

**SLIDE SIX**  
The question remained whether or not to obey the bishop and the fuehrer.
“Meeting in Munich”

After the series of slides, lights fade to black. After several beats, a field drum is heard outside the sanctuary. Into the sanctuary enter a small (any sized) chorus of Nazi armed-banded men singing the Lutheran hymn, “A Mighty Fortress is Our God.” They find their places in the front of the church sanctuary and finish the first stanza.

REV. SHULTZ, dressed in the vestments of a Lutheran minister, walks to the pulpit in the front.

REV SCHULTZ
We now invite our congregation to sing the remaining three stanzas of this important hymn of Martin Luther.

THE CONGREGATION, prompted by the men’s chorus, proceeds to sing the second and third stanzas. Just before the end of the third stanza, ELFRIEDE interrupts.

ELFRIEDE
Reverend Schultz, we cannot sing anymore hymns until you tell us if this rumor is true!!

THE CONGREGATION stirs.

HELMUT
Since when are we a church that wastes time responding to rumors?

ELFRIEDE
When it is a rumor involving our children, that’s when!

MORE, LOUDER STIRRINGS.

REV. SCHULTZ quiets the congregation.

REV. SCHULTZ
Apparently you have heard the news. And I am sorry to say that it is not a rumor.

More CONGREGATIONAL STIRRINGS.

REV. SCHULTZ (CONT)
Our Reich Bishop Muller, on his own, and, quite frankly, without authorization from anyone, signed an agreement on December 19th with Baldur von Schirach, the Reich Youth Leader, incorporating the Evangelical Youth Organization into the Hitler Youth.
ELFRIEDE
What does this mean—making our church youth groups into gangs for Hitler?

REV. SHCULTZ
That’s not quite the--

MARTIN
And what do you mean, without authorization from anyone, Pastor? Several of us were well aware that negotiations had been going on for some time between party officials, church leaders and several leaders of the Evangelical Youth Organization. It wouldn’t appear that our Bishop would make such a decision without at least consulting with his colleagues.

KURT
Or consulting with us!

REV. SCHULTZ
This is a period of disorder, and in the confusion Bishop Muller--

MARGARET
Sold our children to the state!

More AUDIENCE stirrings.

That’s exactly what Muller did.

ELFRIEDE and others

AUDIENCE stirrings pro and con.

REV. SCHULTZ
(Scolding, trying to quiet the congregation)
At this point it is unfair to assign to him motivations of betrayal. He is the Bishop, our Bishop! We have all heard his declaration to parents of children in our Evangelical Youth Organization. He was forced to take this step because of his concern for advancing the religious training of all of Germany’s young people, not just those who regularly attend the church. I think he hopes to transform the Hitler Youth by infiltrating it with religion.

MARTIN
Can you imagine these pews filled with children because of church attendance requirements for Hitler Youth?

MARGARET
Such rubbish! Our children are not advertisements for the Fuhrer!
ELFRIEDE
I will not have my children parading for Adolph Hitler!

MARTIN
(Over “… parading for Adolf Hitler.”)
Yet neither are they advertisements for rebellious scheming against the Reich!

MARGARET
Rebellious scheming? Nonsense! We’re questioning the prerogative of the German State!

MARTIN
You are doing more than mere questioning?! More accurately, you are challenging! And you assume the state won’t respond?

MARGARET
Let them respond! Our children are not Caesar’s!

ELFRIEDE
No, they are God’s!

MARTIN
(Loud in order to enter discussion, then softens)
Frau Lubosch, I can appreciate the godly desires for your children--

KARL
Our children and God’s children!

MARTIN
(Shouting until congregation finishes responding)
However... However, comparing our Fuhrer’s simple intentions for the unification of our children’s focus and future under God with the Caesar of Rome, as though our Fuhrer’s requirement was some departure of God’s order, is simplistic and reactionary.

REV SCHULZ
Stop, please stop! Before any further words are spoken, aren’t we here for prayer and worship?

JAN
May I say something, pastor?

REV SCHULZ
If it will bring peace, you may.
JAN
I would suggest that this mid-week prayer meeting and Bible study would be greatly served if we took the time to discuss before God and one another this potentially disturbing order from the bishop. We will know how to pray more wisely when mere rumor is refined by factual reporting.

REV SHULTZ
I only have the fact of the order from the bishop.

ELFRIEDE
But when were you going to tell us?

REV SCHULTZ
Today, in fact, as part of our announcements—

KARL
But this order is more important than then information on our next church picnic!

REV SCHULTZ
I was going to suggest that we call a special meeting on Friday to discuss the ramifications of the order.

ELFRIEDE
But I for one do not want to wait until Friday!

JAN
I agree, pastor.

OTHERS respond.

REV SCHULTZ
Then may our Lord be honored in these discussions—discussions, may I remind you, that are to manifest the fruit of the Spirit.

A hearty confirmation from CONGREGATION.

REV SCHULTZ
Then, where were we in our discussion?

MARGARET
I was suggesting that the bishop’s order is in danger of selling our children, and their religious training, to the Nazi state.

MARTIN
(Louder)
And I was suggesting that our Fuhrer’s intentions with this order to pour are Lutheran youth groups into the Hitler youth are to unify our children’s focus and future under God.

MARGARET
Herr Bernhardt, you refer to our Fuhrer’s simple intentions--how did you put them?

MARTIN
To unify our children’s focus and future under God, I believe were my words.

MARGARET
By forced placement into an organization bearing his name--the sheer audacity of it. I don’t claim to be an historian, but it takes no gigantic stretch of the imagination to say this is unprecedented.

KARL
And completely unacceptable!

MARTIN
Then kindly submit your proposal, especially in light of the biblical command to obey those in authority over you.

KARL
Dissolve the old youth groups and form new ones.

OTHERS shout agreement.

MARTIN
Only to have them also ordered into the Hitler Youth!

ELFRIEDE
Then form new ones again!

REV. SCHULTZ
I frankly don’t get the impression that the Fuhrer enjoys wasting time playing leap frog!

MARTIN
I concur with that sentiment! Defying the government orders merely ups the ante unnecessarily. Do we really want a confrontation?

MARGARET
We want what’s best for our children!

MARTIN
And the Fuhrer has stated clearly that this is his intention. Earlier this year, as we are all aware in his speech at Stuttgart, he strongly asserted his devotion to Christianity and his
desire to fill our culture again with the Christian spirit. It is clear he recognizes the Christian faith as the basis, in his words, “of our collective morality.”

JAN
I don’t believe him and I don’t trust him.

MARGARET
Nor do I! How can you talk of anything being clear, especially the intentions of a chancellor not yet in the Reichstag one year? As a parent I am convinced that the ethical and religious training of my children rests with my husband and me and with the church, not the National Socialist Party. This order of assimilation is an affront to our sensibilities, an attack upon the authority of the church, and an appalling disregard for the sanctity of the family.

MARTIN
Once again I ask, do we really want a confrontation?

MARGARET
I would suggest we confidently assess that any resistance on our part will not be interpreted as confrontational, but as merely allowing those newly in power to see the limits of the state’s demands upon the church.

MARTIN
Limits? What limits? Certainly you don’t adhere to the fanciful American notion that church and state are completely separate?

MARGARET
Perhaps I don’t know enough to call it fanciful, but we need not go to America to find an essential warning against governmental tampering into the affairs of the church. It has not yet been on year since this “Altona Confession”, and in times like this, I am glad I carry it with me to church, to the bank, to the market, or to the playground to watch my children...

SHE unfolds paper she has kept in her purse.

GRETHE
(Sarcastically)
Is this you adult catechism?

SOME laugh.

MARGARET
I am not the only one here who carries this confession. When it was written by Karl Barth this past January, several of us decided it was important enough to refer to often and to carry with us until it was written on our heart and recited in such a time as this. (SHE reads)
We are called to be obedient to government. If it should happen that the government acted contrary to the best interests of the State, then each person must decide, when the moment has come, when one must obey God more than men.

(Folding the paper, SHE places it back in her purse)
I would contend that moment has come!

A pause.

MARTIN
So, you would choose confrontation with the Fuhrer over this issue, completely misunderstanding his intentions?

OTTO
Frau Lubosch, did you not leave out one primary position statement of the Altona Confession?

MARGARET
What is that?

OTTO
Their maintaining that no one state government form is better than the rest.

MARGARET
And your point is?

OTTO
Need I put it bluntly?

MARGARET
(Sarcastically)
Evidently, the rest of us are blind, Herr Dornburger.

OTTO
It would appear that Nazi storm troopers dressed in full uniform
(HE points to S.A. men sitting in pews)
at worship services and meetings such as this would strongly disagree with the
(Slight derisiveness)
Altona Confession that no state government form is better than the rest.

RUDOLF
You are correct, Herr Dornburger.

MARGARET
And so we are given vivid, fully-dressed reminders of your ultimate allegiance.