

Summer in Paris, Light from the Sky by Ken Scholes

November 2007 Issue

Life is marked by intersections and measured by the choices we make at each pause in our journey. I am fortunate to have made a good choice at the right time but more than that, many before me did the same and so the stones were set in the path long before the day of my birth. Will you not come after me and walk the stones so many before you have helped to put in place?

Adolf Hitler

Commencement Address, Yale University School of Human Rights and Social Justice, 1969

Adolf Hitler came to Paris in June 1941 feeling the weight of his years in his legs and the taste of a dying dream in his mouth. He spent most of that first day walking up and down the Champs Elysées, working the stiffness out of his bones and muscles while he looked at the shops and the people. Some of the dull ache was from the wooden benches on the train from Hamburg; most of it was age. And beneath the discomfort of his body, his soul ached too.

He'd never been here before, he thought as the Parisians slipped past in the noon-time sun. He snorted at the revelation. A fine painter you are, he told himself.

Of course, it was only for the summer. Then Paris...and painting, he imagined, would slip quietly to the back row of his memory. He would return to Berlin and take a job for the government buying supplies he would never see for people that he would never know. In the end, he realized, he would become his father's son and live out the rest of his days as a quiet civil servant.

Alois Hitler had been a hard man, even a cruel man, before the accident. But death up close can change the hardest heart and after nearly a month in the hospital, he returned to his family with a deep faith and a sense of compassion for all humankind...especially his children. He listened. He prayed. He studied St. Francis, St. John of the Cross, Meister Eckhard and even Buddha. He became gentle and warm toward his wife and their five children. Until the very end, he encouraged Adolf's dreams. And when he died, still working as a customs official for Napoleon IV's puppet chancellor, he left behind a small but sufficient inheritance to finance his son's art.

By living frugally and occasionally taking odd jobs, Adolf stretched it as far as he could. He'd even set aside a bit for his old age. But come September, he'd decided, it was time to put away the canvas and brush. Time, at fifty-two, to put away childish things.

Adolf sighed.

And then something happened. He stood in the shadow of the Arc de Triomphe, dwarfed by that first Napoleon's grandiose gesture of complete victory, dwarfed by the size of his own dreams in the shadow of over thirty years of failure. He stood, feeling his breath catch in the back of his throat and his eyes turning to water. And suddenly, he was no longer alone.

A girl — a pretty girl, a dark girl dressed in ragged clothing — separated from a crowd of passing students. She walked up to him without a word and kissed him hard on the mouth, pressing her body against him while she fastened a flower into the button-hole of his Prussian great coat. After the kiss, she vanished back into the crowd.

Adolf licked his lips, tasting the apples from her mouth. He took in a great breath, smelling the rose water from her skin and the sunshine from her hair. He listened to the sound of his racing heart and the drum-beat it played. He felt the warmth of her where it had touched him.

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took in a great breath, smelling the rose water from her skin and the sunshine from her hair. He listened to the sound of his racing heart and the drum-beat it played. He felt the warmth of her where it had touched him. It was his first impression of Paris.

His second impression was the perpetually drunk American, Ernie Hemingway. After a day of wandering aimlessly, as the sun dropped behind the horizon and the sky grew deep purple, Adolf found de Gaulle's and went inside because he heard American music. Americans had always fascinated him. He'd met a few — not many because they tended to have little use for Europe. America was an entire continent without

kings or emperors or royalty of any kind. A place where they selected their own President every four years and where any one of the ninety states from Brazil to Newfoundland was a thriving nation in and of itself united by democracy, progress and freedom.

A middle aged man stood on the bar leading the room in a bawdy tune. He worked the song like a conductor, waving a pistol instead of a baton, and scattered drinkers around the room joined in the song. A man in a ratty suit crouched over the piano, mashing the keys with his fingers with a rag-time flair. Adolf watched and smiled. The man sang too fast and slurred too much for the lyrics to make much sense but the

gestures and pelvic thrusts conveyed the gist of it.

When the song was done, the man dropped lightly to the floor amid cheers and brushed past Adolf on his way to a table at the back of the room. Adolf found an empty table near the American and sat down. The pianist launched into another song, this time in French — a language Adolf grasped better — and he blushed. Looking around, he was the only one who did.

"Are you a priest, then?" the American shouted across at him in English. Adolf looked up. "I beg pardon?"

The American grinned. "You're blushing. I thought you might be a

priest." He shook his head. "No. Not a priest."

"Well then, are you a homosexual?"

The word escaped him at first, then registered. He blushed even more, looking around for a different table to sit at. He had heard that Americans were quite forward but until now had never experienced it. "I'm sorry, sir," he said. "I'm not liking men, though I am very flattered by your...." He struggled to find the right word, couldn't find it, then said the closest one he *did* find. "By your...love."

For a moment, he thought the American might hit him. But suddenly, the American started to laugh. The laugh started low and built fast, spilling over

like an over-filled bathtub. Adolf wasn't sure what to do so he offered a weak, tight smile. The American leaped up with his beer in his hand, staggered a few steps and sat heavily in the empty chair at Adolf's table. He leaned in and Adolf could smell days of alcohol rising from his skin. "Deutsche?" Adolf nodded. "Ja."

The American stuck out his hand. "Ernie Hemingway." He took the hand, squeezed it firmly and pumped it once. "Adolf Hitler." Ernie waved to the bar. "Hey, de Gaulle!"

A slim man looked up. "Oui, Monsieur Hemingway?"

"A beer for my new friend Adolf Hitler."

The bartender nodded. "Un moment, s'il vous plaît." Then Hemingway leaned in again, his voice low. "You got any money?" Adolf nodded. The man's fast speech and unpredictable movements made him nervous. He found himself blinking involuntarily.

"That'll save us both a bit of embarrassment."

He nodded again, not quite understanding. The bartender arrived with two pints of light, foamy beer and Hemingway raised the glass. "To life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness," he said.

"To your health," Adolf said.

"I'm afraid it's far too late for that," another voice said. The pianist —

finished with his tune —

pulled up a chair, flipping it around backwards and straddling it. He was a short man, wiry with curly hair gone gray, blue eyes and a brief but contagious smile. "We just have to hold out hope that somehow he'll manage to pickle himself before he begins to decompose." Adolf didn't understand but said nothing.

"Adolf Hitler," Hemingway said, "Old Mother England's wittiest bastard child, Chuck Chaplin." They shook hands.

"Fresh from the train?" Chuck asked in perfect German. Adolf nodded. "Yes. This morning."

"Looking for work here? It'll be hard.

You're not Jewish are you?"

"No, not Jewish. I'm a painter."

Chuck nodded. "Are you any good?"

Hitler smiled. "My English is better than my painting." The pianist returned the smile. "And your English is atrocious."

"Your German is quite good."

Chuck grinned. "Benefit of an English education."

Ernie looked perplexed, trying to follow the rush of German in his drunken state. "What are you two going on about?"

Chuck turned to Ernie. "Drink your beer, you silly sod." Then, back to Adolf in German: "Do you have a place to stay yet?"

Adolf shook his head. "I was going to ask after a boarding house or hotel."

"Nonsense," Chuck said, switching to English. "You can stay with us. At least until you find something more suitable."

Adolf looked around again, suddenly unsure what to do. He lowered his voice. "I'm not a homosexual," he said in a quiet voice, nodding towards Ernie. "Tell him for me? In English?"

"What's he saying?" Ernie asked.

"That he admires your mustache and the light in your eyes," Chuck answered. "Particularly the way you dimple when you smile."

"Bloody British fairy," Hemingway muttered into his beer.

"That's not," Chuck said slowly and

deadpan, "what your mother said to me last night." Perhaps, Adolf thought, Paris was a mistake after all.

Very little is known of his life before the Revolution. The records and recollections of those who might have known were lost in the heavy firebombings during the final days of the War for Democratic Change. And the man himself rarely offered up a personal detail, despite having given over five thousand documented speeches over the span of his life. In an early American lecture, he casually mentioned coming to Paris to be a painter. In a spontaneous speech at his son's wedding, he fondly recalled a kiss

in the shadow of the Arc de Triomphe. We may never know more than these scattered references. But would knowing matter? Or would it merely add to the legend of this great but humble man?

Nicholas Freeman, Editor

Preface, A Kiss in the Shadow: Essays on The Pre-1942 Life of Adolf Hitler, Harbor Light Press, Seattle, 1986

By day Hitler wandered the city with his easel and stool and pallet and canvas. At night, he sang and drank with his new friends down at de Gaulle's. He never did move out. He slept on a cot in the corner of their large loft and tapped

into what little remained of his inheritance to help with expenses. Ernie and Chuck took him under their wing, showing him around the city and helping him with his English.

The economy was struggling as a massive influx of Jewish refugees fled the Russian Civil War. The Empire was already stretched thin with footholds in Africa and Indonesia. There were quiet rumors that Napoleon IV was gradually losing his grip on sanity as he entered his eighties and even quieter rumors that his military advisors and generals had plans of their own. Still, the summer was hot and bright and one afternoon in July, Adolf looked up from painting the Arc de Triomphe and locked eyes with the

girl who had kissed him there over a month earlier. She was staring at him, a slight smile pulling at her mouth. He licked his brush and tried to resume work, suddenly uncomfortable with her wide, dark eyes. She took a step closer.

"You're no good at it," she said to him in heavily accented French. "You've gotten the colors all wrong."

He shrugged, feeling a stab of annoyance though her voice was playful. "It's how I see it."

"Perhaps you need spectacles," she said, taking another step closer. Adolf chuckled. "And this from a girl who kisses men old enough to be her grandfather?"

"You don't look so old," she said.

"Perhaps you are the one who needs spectacles?" He looked at her. She was tall, slender, with long arms and legs. Her breasts were small but high on her chest.

"How old are you?" she asked. When he didn't answer right away, she grinned. "I'm nineteen."

"I'm...old." He set down his brush.

She laughed; it sounded like gypsy music to him. Then she repeated herself. "You don't look so old."

He nodded.

She stretched out her hand. "I'm Tesia."

He took it, uncertain what to do with it. Finally, he raised it to his mouth and kissed it lightly.

"Adolf."

"German?"

"Yes. You?"

"Polish."

"We're neighbors then," he said, not knowing what else to say. She smiled. Her teeth were straight and white. "Yes." She pointed at the bench near his stool. "May I sit and watch?"

"May I paint you?"

She laughed again. "I couldn't let you. You'd get the colors all wrong and I'd be cross with you." She caught her breath. "I wouldn't want to be cross with you." He snorted and went back to work. She was right, he realized. He could never paint her. He painted quietly and she watched in silence. When it grew dark,

he asked her if she wanted to have dinner with him and she said yes. He packed up his supplies and tossed his canvas into a nearby waste-bin.

"Why do you do that?" she asked.

"Like you said: I'm no good." He shrugged. "Sometimes I use them to keep me warm at night. They burn well."

"Ridiculous." She dug the unfinished painting from the garbage. "I like it." She tucked it under her arm.

They walked to a small cafe that overlooked the Seine. He went in first as she paused at the door. From inside, the smell of roasted rabbit, baking bread and fresh sliced onions drifted out. The waiter frowned when he saw them.

"No," he said.

"Pardon?"

He pointed to a newly painted sign near the door. "No Jews." Adolf felt a stab of anger. It passed quickly. "Monsieur," he said in careful French, "I'm not Jewish."

"Not you," the waiter said, pointing at the girl. "Her." Adolf looked. She blanched, her eyes a bit wide and her nostrils flaring. She clenched her jaw. He saw the band on her arm now. He hadn't noticed it before but why would he? He'd heard about the new laws but they had seemed far away to him. He shook his head in disbelief. "You are making a mistake."

The waiter said something under his breath that Adolf couldn't quite

understand. He opened his mouth to protest but felt a firm hand on his arm.

"We'll go somewhere else," Tesia said.

They had a quiet dinner by moonlight. She stole two apples from a cart. He bought bread and cheese. After eating, she kissed him again, this time more slowly. He pulled away. "I'm too old."

"Nonsense," she said and kissed him again.

Afterwards, he asked her, "Why did you kiss me that day when you first saw me?"

"Because," she said, "you were beautiful and you stood alone." He walked her home. Twice, as blue-coat soldiers passed them on the street, she

pressed herself closer to him, concealing the band on her arm.

"Why don't you take it off?" he asked her.

"I don't know," she said, standing on the doorstep of a run-down hotel. Inside, he could hear loud voices conversing in Polish and Yiddish and Russian. "It's against the law, I suppose."

"It's a silly law."

"Most laws are." She smiled, kissed him quickly and fled inside. Whistling a love song he dimly remembered from his youth, Adolf made his way back to de Gaulle's and his waiting friends.

When he looked for her the next day and the next, she was nowhere to be found. When he returned to the old hotel,

he found it somber and empty.

July slipped into August.

My father never talked about the events leading up to the war. He simply smiled, waved his hand and said it was unimportant. After he died, I found a photograph in his belongings. He and two other men sitting at a table in some nameless bar raising their glasses to the camera. He was gaunt, bearded and hollow-eyed, dressed in a tattered Prussian coat. The back of the photograph reads Summer in Paris, Light from the Sky, scrawled in his pinched, careful German script and it seems to have been taken at night, possibly in 1941, the year he met my

mother. His companions, their connection to my father and their present whereabouts are unknown.

Jacob Ernest Hitler

Memories of My Father: An Introduction to the 50th Anniversary Edition of Unser Kampf, Penguin Books, New York, 1992

The explosion was all anyone could talk about.

On August twelfth a blast ripped through Notre Dame Cathedral as Napoleon IV knelt to receive Mass from his archbishop. Fourteen people were killed, including the Emperor and his young wife. Photographs of the bombers, arrested later that night, filled the

newspapers. Four frightened Jewish youth. Hanging them, the generals now in command claimed, would not even scratch the surface of the conspiracy that threatened the Empire. Still, they hanged them quickly.

Hemingway threw down the newspaper in disgust. "Those sons of bitches," he muttered. Chuck and Adolf looked up at him.

Ernie kicked the paper. "Do you believe this?"

He'd been drinking most of the day. At least once, they'd taken his pistol away as he waved it about. There were more soldiers in the streets these days and though the patrons of de Gaulle's little tavern thought their American mascot

eccentric, the blue-coats might not be so inclined.

Chuck shrugged. "Name of the game, my friend."

"It's a goddamn travesty," Ernie went on. "They killed their own goddamn Emperor and then they blamed the Jews."

"It's just four," Adolf said.

Ernie pulled back one fist, reaching for his pistol with the other. "Four? It's not just four. Don't you see it coming? There will be more laws. It's a shell game, Adolf. They will whip up the people and keep them focused on their chosen scapegoat. They will move the Jews now to a separate place for their own good, to protect them from the angry

mobs that they themselves have created. When the dust settles, there will be a lot of dead Jews and a new Emperor who is *not* a Bonaparte." He pointed to the picture of a French general in the newspaper. "Behold your new Emperor."

People were listening. They looked uncomfortable. Chuck lowered his voice. "That's enough, Ernie. You're making a scene."

Ernie jumped up, his chair tumbling backwards. "Someone sure as Christ needs to. What you people need is a revolution."

Adolf caught his sleeve. "Sit down, my friend."

Ernie looked around as if suddenly

coming to his senses. He sat. Chuck laughed. "You and your revolutions."

"It worked for us, didn't it?"

"If it worked so well," Chuck said, "why are you here?" Ernie stole Adolf's beer. "Because I'm an American. I'm free to come and go as I please." Adolf remembered stories about the American Revolution. He'd studied it in school, though his textbooks said little. No one really believed that the young nation of upstarts would live beyond its cradle. But Lincoln averted civil war over slavery and assisted the Canadians in gaining their own independence. Naturally, the grateful northerners joined the Union. And shortly after, the Spanish-American conflict left the

United States with an entire continent under its sway.

"A revolution would never work here," he told Ernie. Chuck agreed. "He's right. The army's far too strong."

"Ah, but words are stronger," Hemingway said.

Adolf leaned forward. "Words? Against rifles?"

Ernie waved for another round. Suddenly, his eyes glinted with an almost savage intelligence.

"Listen," he said. "I'll tell you just how I'd do it." The beer arrived, de Gaulle looking pained when Ernie waved the ticket away. "Later, mon ami. That's a promise." He looked around to make sure no one was listening. "First,"

he said, "I'd write a book." Chuck laughed. "But you're a terrible writer. Your words stumble about on the page like drunken soldiers in women's shoes." He paused for dramatic effect. "And those were just your grocery lists."

Ernie pointed, eyebrows narrowed in a mock scowl. "You're quite the bloody comedian." Adolf chuckled at his friends. "So you'd write a book?" Ernie nodded. "Yes. A book about all of the horse-shit here. A book so passionate, so full of raw rage and sorrow that people'd sit up and take notice."

"And that would bring about a revolution?"

"In time it would. Yes."

"Nonsense," Chuck said. "Who'd read

it? The Jews? The gypsies? The Marxist refugees? They don't have pots to piss in or blankets to sleep in. It'd do them more good on the fire, keeping them warm."

"Not the Jews," Ernie said. "The *Americans*." Adolf sat up. "The Americans?"

"Naturally. You'd have to get them involved. First, with the book. Then with speeches. Maybe even a traveling troupe of the persecuted and oppressed. They'd eat it up for breakfast, lunch and dinner. And they've got the resources. Strong army. Strong navy. Airships." Adolf swallowed. "Why ever would they be interested in a Frankish Revolution?"

"Two reasons," Ernie said, holding up two fingers. "One: A democratic

foothold in Europe. Two: The liberation of the Jews."

"The Jews?" Adolf asked.

"Freedom for every race, color, creed," Chuck said in German. "You saw what they did with their emancipated Africans. Liberia's doing quite well; shining that blessed light of liberty for all of Africa to see."

Adolf leaned in. "But most Americans are Christian, aren't they?"

"They are indeed," Ernie said with a grin.

"And?" Chuck asked.

"Jesus Christ was Jewish," Ernie said. "It's all a matter of perspective." He raised his glass. "To democracy," he said.

They raised their glasses, too. A boy who sold photographs to tourists pointed his camera at them and raised his eyebrows. Ernie winked at him.

A bulb flashed. A shutter snapped.

The next night, Adolf gladly handed over a handful of coins for the photograph and tacked it up on the dressing mirror in their loft.

He never considered himself to be a great man but an adequate man. He never considered himself to have made history but rather to have been in the right place and the right time to do his small part. Well-spoken but shy, intelligent but unassuming, he caught the public off guard with his dry wit,

his careful words and his passionate commitment to human rights. For this reason, it is said that only Hitler could go to America. Dr. John F. Kennedy

Out of the Ashes: A History of Modern Thought from the French Revolution for Democratic Change to the Re-Birth of the Nation of Israel, 1941 - 1952, Harvard University Press, Boston, 1971.

Throughout August, he kept an eye open for Tesia but Adolf was convinced he'd never see her again. She was a smart girl, he told himself. Smart enough to see the stirred pot start to boil. As badly as he wished to see her, he hoped he would not because that would mean

she hadn't left this dangerous place.

There were more soldiers now and more laws. More signs in shop windows. Rumors flew of outlying rural churches desecrated by Jews. The local synagogue was burned to the ground by angry citizens while the police and soldiers stood by.

"It's heartbreaking," Adolf told Chuck one afternoon as they walked to de Gaulle's. They spoke in exclusively in English now; Adolf had gotten quite good at it. Chuck kicked an empty can. "It is. Man's inhumanity to man, I think they call it." Adolf stopped. "I think Ernie was right."

Chuck laughed and stopped, too. "About the book?"

"Maybe. About the Revolution. About the Americans."

"Perhaps," Chuck said, resuming his brisk pace. "But I don't think it will happen."

"Why not?"

He clapped Adolf on the shoulder. "Who's going to do it? Are you going to do it?"

"Of course not."

"Why not?"

Adolf opened his mouth. He started to say *because I'm not a Jew* and the realization of it twisted his heart in his chest. "It's not my line of work."

"Exactly," Chuck said. "This sort of work requires more than just a willing body."

"More?"

Chuck's hands moved as he talked. "Joan of Arc, King Arthur, Moses. What did they have?" Adolf thought about it for a moment. "I don't know."

"God," Chuck said. "They had the voice of God, the vision of the grail, a light from Heaven. A power they could point to over their shoulder."

"A light from Heaven?"

Chuck pointed up. "Licht vom Himmel."

Adolf nodded. They stood outside de Gaulle's now, waiting to go in. He smiled at his friend.

"And when they have that?"

"One spark to start the fire," Chuck said.

They walked in. Ernie waved them to their table. He was remarkably sober for the time of day. He grinned. "You're becoming popular, Adolf."

Adolf raised his eyebrows. "Yes?"

Ernie nodded towards the bar. "De Gaulle said a girl was in looking for you earlier. Said she'd be back later."

He coughed as a shudder passed over him. "Did he mention her name?"

"Foreign girl. Dark." He lowered his voice. "He thought she was Jewish; I assured him she was not."

Adolf took the meaning from his words and nodded. "Thank you." He shrugged. "She's more trouble than you need, friend. These are bad times for love."

"I don't love her," Adolf said. "I hardly know her. And she's just a girl." Ernie patted his hand. "That's what they all say." He opened his mouth to continue but the sudden opening and closing of the front door stopped him. A young man stood panting in the doorway and the room went quiet.

"They're relocating the Jews tonight," he said. "Outside of the city. For their own protection, they said."

"*Who* said?" de Gaulle asked.

"I heard it from a soldier. They're lined up along the Champs Elysées. Blue-coats for block upon block. They've even called up the reserves."

Ernie looked at Adolf. "For their own protection," he said quietly. Outside, the

shouting started. Whistles blowing, sirens wailing. Adolf hung his head. "They'll go, *won't* they? They won't fight back."

"They might," Chuck said. "But after a few of them are killed, they'll stop. They'll go like sheep and hope the butcher is a shepherd."

Adolf rubbed his eyes, disbelief gnawing at his stomach. "What do we do?" Ernie looked up, his face pale. "We wait here for it to be done. Then we leave Paris." The bartender dimmed the lights. He passed around shot glasses and bottles. The handful of men drank themselves drunk and fell asleep at their tables.

In a whisky fog, Hitler dreamed of

another life, another time. A dark time, a time when a caricature of himself strutted about in uniform, barking out orders and gazing with pride upon a broken cross. And other men in uniform, men who saw the light from the sky spreading out behind Adolf like a halo, raised their hands to him and cried "Heil." And on the hands that they raised, blood shone out in that awful light. Blood of the martyrs, blood of the ages, and Adolf looked down at his own hands and saw that they were bloody, too, and he reached back to find some of his father's faith and compassion but found that in *that* life, in *that* world, there was nothing but rage and hatred to reach for.

Hitler wept.

He woke to screaming and leaped to his feet.

Ernie mumbled; Chuck stirred.

He heard the screaming again, distant from the alley behind the tavern. Either the others were too drunk to notice or too drunk to care. He moved quickly to the back door and stepped out into the night.

"Hello?"

The screaming stopped. Instead, he heard muffled, muted sound. He followed it. Behind a pile of crates he saw two large forms crouched on the ground over a smaller bundle that bucked and twisted. As he drew closer, he realized they were two soldiers and a

girl. One blue-coat held the girl down, a razor at her throat and a hand over her mouth. The other had pried her legs apart, his own trousers pushed down to his knees as he raped her.

"Wasn't enough to kill our Lord," one of the soldiers hissed. "You had to kill our Emperor, too, Jew-bitch."

Adolf stopped. His heart fell into a hole somewhere inside him. His stomach followed after. His eyes locked with the girl's and suddenly she stopped struggling. She's waiting for me to save her, Adolf thought. He couldn't move. He stood transfixed while powerlessness and shame washed over him. Tesia lay still and the soldier thrust twice more before looking up.

"You there," he said. "You this girl's father?" Adolf cleared his voice. "No."

"Then mind your business. You can come back for your turn later." Something snapped like a guitar string in his spine. Adolf turned and fled for de Gaulle's, his feet pounding the cobblestones. Behind him, he heard Tesia struggling again, trying to scream but unable to do more than moan. He ran into the tavern, kicking over chairs and tables as he went, until he reached his own. He stood panting, sobbing over his friends, then bent over Ernie to frisk him.

Ernie stirred. "What the hell — "

Adolf found the revolver, yanked it from the pocket, and wordlessly stalked

out of the tavern. Each step steady, deliberate, until he saw the soldiers. Until he saw Tesia beneath them. Then he stopped and looked down at them.

A blue-coat looked up. "I thought I told you — "

The pistol didn't roar or buck like at the cinema. It popped and shimmied just a bit and he thumbed the hammer and pulled the trigger again to be sure it had really worked though the soldier was already falling sideways, his mouth working like a landed trout. The other soldier let go of Tesia and scrambled backwards on his heels and hands, fear white on his face. The revolver popped again once and he thrashed away, popped twice and he rolled over with a

sigh.

Adolf, still clutching the pistol, dropped heavily to his knees. Tesia lay still, her dress and blouse ripped, her eyes closed. He reached for her, pulled her to himself and she fought him, kicking and flailing and growling low in her throat. He released her for a moment, then tried again. This time, she let him pull her in and he cradled her, rocking back and forth. He had no idea what to say so he said nothing and let that silence sweep him aside like a giant hand. After a few minutes, shouts from over rooftops brought him back from that quiet place he'd gone to.

He shook her gently. "Tesia, we have to go."

He stood, pulling her up and keeping her close. The revolver dangled in his hand and he looked again at his handiwork. The two soldiers were dead now or soon would be. They lay sprawled like cast away dolls. The realization of what he'd done struck him. Blood on his hands. Hanging on to her, he bent as far away as he could and threw up on the ground. When he ran the back of his hand over his mouth he smelled whisky and cordite. He heard a quiet cough and looked up. Ernie, Chuck and a few others from the tavern stood there watching him.

Chuck looked at the bodies and then the girl. "Adolf, what have you done?" Ernie stepped forward, snatching the

pistol from his hand. He tucked it into his waistband. "I think he did the right thing, Chuck. This is where it starts." One spark, Adolf thought.

Were he alive today, he would say himself that this monument is not about one man's struggle but about the struggle of many. Our struggle, as he put it so well. From 1942 to 1952 — when the charter was finally signed — he struggled alongside us, raising support and awareness for our cause, never asking for anything for himself. With his wife and his children often by his side, he went from city to city speaking in any venue that would listen. And though originally published

in his native German, his book was a shot heard 'round the world, translated into over forty languages within its first five years in print. I heard him speak shortly before his death: "Well-aimed words will always be more powerful than rifles," he said. And his words roused a slumbering giant, turning its head towards cruelty and oppression, towards a cry for freedom in a far away land. Rabbi Benjamin Levin

Dedication Speech, Hitler Memorial, Jerusalem, Israel, 1992.

They told Adolf to take her to the loft and wait for morning. De Gaulle had a nephew who was driving to Calais the

next day; they'd hide Hitler and the girl in the back of the truck and hope for the best. He ripped off Tesia's armband and tossed it away.

"Listen to me," he told her. "You are not Jewish. You are my daughter, Klara, and you are ill. We are looking for the hospital. We left your papers at home by mistake. Do you understand me?"

She nodded. Her eyes were red and she limped now, but she stood on her own.

"Good." They set out at a brisk walk. More shouting and sirens punctuated the night, suddenly joined now by occasional gunshots.

Along the way they saw soldiers running. They saw groups of men and

women, some now fighting back. People called news to one another from their opened windows. Two soldiers had been killed raping a girl, someone cried. A band of drunks was storming the police station looking for guns, another shouted. Adolf heard it as if it were far away and kept pushing them towards safety, towards home.

He locked them inside. He took down half a bottle of schnapps from the cupboard and poured two drinks with shaking hands. Tesia did not speak and did not meet his eyes. He knew she was still in shock, the color drained away from her skin and her face slack. He tucked her into his cot, wrapping his great coat over her and when he pulled

away, she clutched at him and mumbled something.

He bent in closer and heard the words. "You were beautiful," she said, "and you stood alone." He held her as sobs racked his body. The world had never seemed so grim and despairing and he wondered if it had always been that way, if he'd just never seen it before. He felt the broken girl in his arms, felt her breath against his neck and smelled the sweat and dirt on her. Behind him, in the window, something like Heaven's light grew beyond his wildest imaginings, filling that cavity in the world's soul. His tears subsided; Tesia slept. After an hour of holding her, he left her side to pack his things. He'd

leave his paints, his pallet, his brushes. He knew he'd never use them again. But he did pack his suitcase with clothing, bedding and canned food. He also checked his papers and counted his money. Somewhere, he could buy her the papers she would need.

On a scrap of paper, Ernie had hastily scribbled a name and an address — a friend of a friend at the U.S. Embassy in London. Ernie had pressed it into his hand before leaving with Chuck and the others to storm the police station and start their Revolution for Democratic Change.

"Viva la France," they had said as they went racing down the cobblestones. Adolf took down their photograph from

the mirror. He looked at it and smiled at his friends. If I'm to be a writer, he thought, I should write something about this place, this time. Something so I will never forget.

He found a pen, turned the photo over, and after a moment's thought, wrote on the back of it in his pinched, careful, German script: *Summer in Paris, Light from Heaven*. Hitler weighed the pen carefully in his hand and wondered if one man could make a difference. He weighed his destiny carefully in his heart and wondered if the Americans would listen.