

# **In the Garden of Beasts: Love, Terror, and an American Family in Hitler's Berlin Study Guide**

**In the Garden of Beasts: Love, Terror, and an  
American Family in Hitler's Berlin by Erik Larson**

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# Plot Summary

In the Garden of Beasts, by Erik Larson, is the story of William E. Dodd, who was the United States Ambassador to Germany from 1933 through 1937, just when Adolph Hitler's ascension to power was taking place. With obvious signs of trouble brewing, diplomats were not vying for the job as US Ambassador to Germany. Filling that position was one of the first and most difficult challenges facing the newly elected Franklin Delano Roosevelt.

William E. Dodd was a history professor at the University of Chicago, where he had served for decades. Although he always had political aspirations, he was never called upon to serve his country. In 1933, Dodd was frustrated that his career at the university had really never taken off and that he had been by-passed by years for diplomatic positions within the government. He was on the verge of retiring from the university to devote his remaining years to writing when he learned he was a candidate for US Ambassador to Germany, a position which was located in Berlin.

When FDR made the offer to Dodd, he told him he'd give him only two hours to decide. After a quick discussion with his wife, he accepted the position. Dodd, his wife, and his two adult children took off on an ocean liner headed for Europe. Once arriving in the German capital, the Dodds found the city intriguing and the people warm and welcoming. The rumors they had heard about the rising violence after Adolph Hitler had risen to the position of German Chancellor and concluded that the press had been exaggerating the events.

As the months passed, however, Dodd began to see that signs that the Third Reich was a serious and growing danger. But Dodd was in a precarious position. As the head diplomat representing the United States, he was limited on his public statements because they were guided by American foreign policy. And despite the fact that President Roosevelt and the State Department under Secretary Hull were sent reports about the growing threat posed by Hitler and the Nazis and the violence perpetrated against Jews and Americans in Germany, there was a reluctance for the administration to publicly denounce these actions. There were many pressures on the Roosevelt administration to remain quiet about the Nazis. The State Department wanted to maintain diplomatic ties, American Jews were afraid that their German relatives would be treated more harshly, and the vast majority of the American public did not want to become embroiled in a European war.

Dodd thought of leaving--after all he and his family lived in danger--but his work ethic would not allow him to. He maintained relations with the Nazis as long as possible, but towards the end of his time in Berlin, he began to speak out against the atrocities that were increasing by the day. After Dodd returned to America in 1937, he felt it was his duty to speak out and let the world know what was really going on in Germany. Soon after, the entire world would know what was taking place under the Nazis and realize that Dodd had been right all along.

# **Introduction: 1933: The Man Behind the Curtain**

## **Summary**

Joseph Schachno, a thirty-one-year-old doctor from New York, had been practicing medicine in Berlin. He appeared at the American consulate in Berlin, where he was examined. The skin had been flayed from most of his body. He had been beaten with whips and was a mass a raw flesh. The American consulates were appalled. He had been charged as an enemy of the state and visited in the night by a squad of uniformed men nine days before. Even though there was no evidence of the crime, he was beaten mercilessly. Since Hitler had been named German chancellor, Americans and Germans alike had been abused and tortured. America's consul General for Germany since 1930, George S. Messersmith, had noticed the change since Hitler's rise to power. Messersmith felt alone in his campaign to warn the world about Hitler. Messersmith hoped that the newly named US Ambassador to Germany would listen.

## **Analysis**

## **Vocabulary**

expatriates, flayed, consulate, immigrate, appalled, atrocity, zealotry, cauldron



# Part I - Into the Wood

## Summary

### Chapter 1: Means of Escape

William E. Dodd was a professor of history at the University of Chicago in 1933. Dodd had been a professor for decades but had grown frustrated dealing with the red-tape of a large university and felt disappointed that, at age sixty-four, his career was not further along. Dodd had political aspirations but was continually passed over for other candidates. With no offers from the political world, Dodd considered leaving teaching in favor of a writing career. He was already an author, having written the biography of President Wilson after Wilson's death. Dodd had personal connections to a member of the Roosevelt administration and told the man that he'd like to be appointed as a minister to Belgium or the Netherlands. He turned down one offer from the administration, but his name remained in the wind.

### Chapter 2: That Vacancy in Berlin

One of the most difficult jobs facing the newly elected Franklin D. Roosevelt was filling the vacancy of the US Ambassador to Germany in Berlin. Even though Berlin was one of the grand capitals of Europe, it was seen as a risky assignment, with the growing violence following Hitler's ascendancy. Hundreds of people, particularly Jews, were being arrested for "protective custody" and perished in custody. Roosevelt offered the position to several individuals, but they turned it down. With Congress about to adjourn, pressure was on the President to select an ambassador since the Congress had to confirm and provide funding for the position. In early June, the name of William E. Dodd was suggested to FDR, who said he would consider the appointment.

Dodd wasn't the typical candidate for an ambassadorship--he wasn't rich or influential. But Dodd did speak German and was familiar with the country. On June 8, Roosevelt contacted Dodd by phone and offered him the position. The president gave Dodd only two hours to think it over. After talking it over with his wife, Mattie, Dodd accepted the offer. Dodd invited his grown children, Martha and Bill, to join them on the venture. Dodd saw it as a chance to spend time with his grown children, who had both left home and pursued their own careers.

### Chapter 3: The Choice

William was not ambitious and had a lackluster career as a history teacher. Martha was the apple of her father's eye, but she had gone through a series of unsuccessful relationships and one failed marriage. Dodd saw taking the ambassadorship in Berlin as a way to take both his children out of unhappy situations.

### Chapter 4: Dread



Dodd traveled to Washington, D.C. to meet with the president. FDR spoke about Germany's economy. US bankers had made great profits by lending money to Germany. The president instructed Dodd to do everything possible to prevent a moratorium on the German debt. It was crucial that they repay their loans. Initially, FDR's did not speak out against the Nazis and the growing violence against the Jews. It was treacherous ground and FDR chose to remain silent. American Jews were split on the stance the US should take. Some favored speaking out ardently against Hitler while others favored a quieter path. Most US citizens were not in favor of a mass immigration of European Jews to America. Roosevelt told Dodd that although the Jews were being treated shamefully, it was not a US affair. Dodd could do what he saw fit to protect them but only on an unofficial or personal basis.

Although the activities of the Nazis were reported in American newspapers, most people thought it was exaggerated and did not believe that a nation could treat their people so brutally. Dodd read the many dispatches from Messersmith describing Germany's deterioration and Hitler's abuse of its citizens. Priests were being arrested and former leaders were being placed in concentration camps. Before Dodd left for Berlin, he met with a group of Jewish leaders. They preferred the quieter approach but discussed how Jews were being persecuted by the Nazis--their property was being confiscated and suicide among the Jews had sharply increased. On July 5, 1933, the Dodds boarded their ship, the Washington, which was headed for Hamburg. As the ship left its moorings, Dodd had many misgivings and his wife wept, overcome with sadness and foreboding.

#### Chapter 5: First Night

Martha cried for days for all she had left behind after departing for Germany. But her sadness was soon replaced by a sense of adventure. Like many Americans, she didn't see Hitler as a threat--he was more like a clown. And like many Americans, she was slightly anti-Semitic. On the trip, Dodd often spoke with Rabbi Wise, who was also on board. The rabbi urged Dodd to tell Hitler the truth that public opinion had turned against him. Dodd felt he would have at least a moderate influence on the chancellor but would stay out of his relations with the German people, particularly the Jews.

The Dodds reached Germany on July 13, 1933. The first meeting Dodd had was with George Gordon, counselor of the embassy. Dodd later met with Messersmith and immediately took a liking to him. The feeling was mutual. The family met two women who would play important roles in their life over the next several years. Bella Fromm, a German woman, was a society columnist for a highly respected newspaper. The other woman was Mildred Fish Harnack, an American who developed a friendship with Martha. Mildred was a representative of the American Women's Club in Berlin. On the way to the hotel, Martha was curious about some burnt out buildings she saw but was told by a protocol officer that she was asking too many questions about Germany. He reminded her she was not in America.

Martha was thrilled with the accommodations at the Esplanade Hotel. But the opulent rooms enraged Dodd, who wanted to live frugally and inconspicuously. They took a walk



their first evening and encountered the Tiergarten, Berlin's answer to Central Park. The literal translation of "tiergarten" was "garden of the beasts." Their first taste of Berlin and its people was positive and uplifting. Dodd felt the press had been misrepresenting the country and its new leader.

## **Analysis**

## **Vocabulary**

dissertation, consigned, hubris, sinecure, embodiment, intransigent, risible, euphemism, frivolously, lackluster, tumult, stupendously, confounded, amplified, ambivalence, exorbitant, moratorium, treacherous, copiously, inestimably, succinctly, ambivalent, propaganda, undercurrent, affinities, reportage, ethereal, egregious



# Part II: House Hunting in the Third Reich

## Summary

### Chapter 6: Seduction

When Martha was recovering from a cold, she was visited by Sigrid Schultz, the Chicago Tribune's chief correspondent for Central Europe. Schultz spoke of Germany's deterioration, but Martha, who called it their rebirth, disagreed. Schultz told of the beatings and abuse of the citizens. Arrests were being made of those suspected of being communists or liberals. Martha was annoyed by Schultz's accounts and thought she was exaggerating. Martha was enjoying the Berlin night life and found the Germans she met utterly charming. Many Americans in Berlin shared Martha's rosy view of the German city.

But beneath the happy veneer, German was changing rapidly and drastically. The Germans called their campaign to bring the people, universities and cultural and social institutions in line with National Socialist beliefs Gleichschaltung, which translates to "coordination". Most change occurred without resistance and almost overnight. These changes pitted neighbor against neighbor and spawned lasting conflicts. The Storm Troopers, or Gestapo, became a new presence. A key element of the coordination was the insertion into German civil law was the "Aryan clause", which prohibited Jews from taking government jobs. Other laws and local regulations further restricted Jews. Still the Jews did not feel the serious threat they were under. A new salute was created to honor Hitler that German citizens were required to practice.

### Chapter 7: Hidden Conflict

Dodd remained conservative and lived modestly. He walked most everywhere and dressed plainly. He broke custom by meeting with underlings in their offices. Dodd met with reporters, who had the mistaken idea that he had come to right all the wrongs in Germany. On Dodd's first full day in his position, Hitler's cabinet enacted a new law that authorized the sterilization of those suffering from certain physical and mental ailments. There was evidence that the Germans were intercepting embassy mail.

The Storm Troopers in their brown shirts and the red, white and black banners of the Nazi party were everywhere. Rudolph Diels was the young chief of the Gestapo and was considered by Messersmith to be a man of integrity. Hindenburg, the sick, old German president, was that last barrier to a complete takeover by the Nazis and had publicly rebuked the activities of the Nazi party. Dodd discovered among the lower echelon of the party some officials who wanted to stop Jewish prosecution. One such man was Konstantin Neurath, who felt he could control Hitler and the Nazis. Violence grew, yet the press seemed to remain clueless and Messersmith warned that the accounts of visiting Americans who were treated well should not be relied upon because they were being used to propagandize the reality of what was taking place in Germany.





## Chapter 8: Meeting Putzi

Martha was enjoying the night life and was taken by a friend to her first Nazi party, where she met a bear of a man named Ernst Hanfstaengl, the foreign press chief of the National Socialist Party. He told Martha to call him Putzi. Messersmith didn't like or trust Putzi, who had attended Harvard and spoke perfect English. Martha thought Putzi was charming and talented. He did not like Martha's father, who he thought of as a simple country history professor.

## Chapter 9: Death is Death

Despite the uncertainty and the escalating violence, Dodd tried to stay neutral. He became acquainted with Edgar Mowrer, a famous American correspondent for the Chicago Daily News, a target of the Nazis and thought to be in mortal danger. He came to Dodd for help. He saw a Jewish doctor every two weeks, ostensibly for an appointment, but instead was passed intelligence about Nazi activities. Putzi spread the rumor that Mowrer was a Jew. Gestapo chief Diels confirmed to Dodd that Mowrer was in danger--the mere mention of his name enraged Hitler himself. His editor transferred him to Tokyo but was to stay on in Berlin for a few months. However, the threats against him became so intense that he had to leave. He was deeply disappointed when Dodd refused to intervene.

A Jewish scientist who was a Nobel laureate, Fritz Haber, was being persecuted and sought refuge from Dodd. He was seeking emigration to the US. Dodd promised to make some inquiries. Dodd was unable to help Haber, who fled to England and died shortly after. Years later the Nazis found a new use for an insecticide that Haber had developed. Despite these and other incidents, Dodd maintained the view that Germany was moderating. He was not aware that the Nazis were drafting new laws that would deprive Jews of their citizenship and all civil rights. Dodd wrote Roosevelt that, while he didn't condone the treatment of the Jews, he felt there was a fundamental right for a sovereign nation to govern itself.

## Chapter 10: Tiergartenstrasse 27a

The Dodds moved into the house at Tiergartenstrasse 27a, where they would occupy the first three floors of the mansion and Alfred Panofsky, a Jewish banker who owned the residence, would live with his family on the top floor. Later Dodd learned that Panofsky's real intention for renting the lower floors to Dodd was to give him and his family a buffer in case the Storm Troopers invaded the house. The house became a gathering place for the diplomatic community because it was viewed as a place where people could express their thoughts without fear of retribution. After settling in, they learned that the much feared Captain Rohm, commander of the Storm Troopers, was a neighbor. Another building nearby would soon become the home of a Nazi program to euthanize those with severe mental illness or physical disabilities. Despite the lurking dangers, Dodd still insisted on walking to work every day.



## Analysis

## Vocabulary

convalescing, innocuous, onerous, Aryan, omniscience, denunciation, apoplectic, contours, swastika, proverbial, imprudent, dissonance, vivacious, blatantly, ostensibly, animus, vehement, hierarchy, consolation, insidious, systematic, camaraderie, candor, maundering, chancellery, euthanize



## Part III: Lucifer in the Garden

### Summary

#### Chapter 11: Strange Beings

The Dodds drove south for a weekend getaway and were surprised to see Nazi banners in every town and village. After returning to Berlin, Dodd was met with the news that another American, a thirty-year-old non-Jew surgeon named Daniel Mulvihill from New York City was attacked by a Storm Trooper without provocation. The US Consulate filed a formal protest and the assailant was allegedly arrested. Dodd was assured by a young officer that such incidents would not occur again. Dodd, finally angered by the violence, lectured the officer about the actions of the German soldiers. Martha had continued on a short vacation with friends. She finally understood the horror that was overtaking Germany when, in a small town, she witnesses the brutalization of a young woman who was dragged through the streets by the Storm Troopers. The woman's crime was that she was engaged to a Jewish man. Dodd turned down an invitation to a Nazi party and convinced the ambassadors of France and Britain to do the same. The US State Department was not happy with Dodd's rebuff of the Germans and felt it was unnecessarily provocative.

#### Chapter 12: Brutus

In late August, Dodd met with Hindenburg, who had returned from Berlin from his convalescence. Dodd sensed that the old president did not support the actions of Hitler and the Nazis. H. V. Kaltenborn, an American radio commentator, and his family were assaulted by Storm Troopers, leading to the State Department to consider the issuance of a warning to Americans about travel to Germany. Dodd favored restraint, influenced by Martha, who maintained strong supporter for Hitler. Foreign correspondent Mowrer was forced to leave Berlin because of the threat of violence. He was angry with Messersmith, who had not intervened for him and referred to him as "Brutus" when he departed.

The Dodds held many diplomatic gatherings and were invited to many more, often attending functions attended by Goebbels, Goring and other high ranking Nazis. Dodd felt way too much money was wasted on parties and dinners, given the state of the world's economy.

#### Chapter 13: My Dark Secret

Martha, an attractive young woman and the daughter of the American ambassador, drew the attention of many young men. She became involved with a German flying ace, a French under-secretary and a young German biophysicist. Messersmith quietly disapproved of Martha's relationships, as did others in the diplomatic corps. Her love life took the darkest turn when she became involved with Rudolf Diels, the chief of the



Gestapo. Martha found him handsome and exciting while many others referred to him as the Prince of Darkness, due to the terror and violence he represented. Martha and Diels dated even though both were still married to others. It was finally through her association with Diels that she first began to realize what the Nazis really represented.

#### Chapter 14: The Death of Boris

Martha was also involved with a Russian named Boris Winogradov, who was an officer with the Soviet embassy. They were regular companions but tried to keep their relationship discreet since the Soviet Union was not recognized by the US. What Martha didn't know was that many suspected Boris to be an operative for the Soviet intelligence organization, the NKVD, the predecessor to the KGB.

#### Chapter 15: The "Jewish Problem"

Dodd made a formal complaint to the German government about the treatment of Americans by the Nazis. He enumerated the many attacks on Americans to Foreign Minister Neurath. Dodd told Neurath that he had tried to keep the incidents from being publicized. Dodd warned that if the attacks continued, they would be forced to publicize the violent acts. Neurath didn't like the lecture but agreed to take steps to curtail the violence. Dodd ventured into the Jewish problem, and although antisemitism existed in the US, the government would never support any form of violence or discrimination against them. The world was turning against the Nazis, Dodd warned, adding that Germany would be destroyed by another war. Neurath agreed, but even as they spoke, Hitler was gaining more power and making plans for aggression against other nations.

#### Chapter 16: A Secret Request

Panofsky informed Dodd that he was moving more family members into his fourth floor apartment. It was obvious to Dodd that Panofsky was doing so to protect them from the Nazis. The situation became a problem with the added noise of children and the comings and goings of more people. Dodd began to fully realize the strange and irrational world that he lived in. Terms like "fanatical", "superman", and "subhuman" became part of the language. The death penalty became a constant threat. Phrases like "wiping the Jews off the face of the earth" were heard in Hitler's speeches and those of other senior Nazis. Attacks on Americans continued. Persecution of Jews became more widespread. Dodd's reports began to take on a more solemn and defeated tone. Dodd asked for and received a three-month leave to return to Chicago.

#### Chapter 17: Lucifer's Run

While Diels was away, his home was invaded by men dressed in black. They searched the apartment and confiscated diaries and other documents. The raid was led by SS Captain Herbert Packebusch. Conflict was increasing within the Nazi ranks. Diels was in Goring's camp while Heinrich's Himmler's power was growing. Diels, therefore, had become a target of Himmler's forces. After being informed about the raid by his wife, Diels, with contingent of uniformed police officers, confronted Packebusch in his office and arrested him. The two men almost came to death blows, forcing Goring and



Himmler to strike a compromise. As a result, Diels was demoted to an assistant police commissioner. Soon the SS had orders to arrest Diels. He fled to Czechoslovakia.

Martha's friendship with Mildred Harnack deepened. Later it was learned that Mildred's husband, Arvid, had been recruited by Soviet intelligence to secretly work against the Nazis. Martha, unaware of Arvid's covert activities, became constant companions of the couple. Martha once again shocked the diplomatic world when she became involved with Ernest von Salomon, a writer who was complicit in the assassination of a former minister.

#### Chapter 18: Warning from a Friend

Martha began throwing lavish parties, but most were failures because the attendees represented diverse groups that didn't communicate. Nazis, Jews and creative people like artists and poets did not play well together. Dodd still maintained that he could be the voice of moderation and tamp down the aggression and violence. He would be subtle but effective in his criticism of the Nazis. In a speech, Dodd referred to the benefit of learning from history, the underlying message was Germany needed to remember just a few decades before when they lost a world war. A number of Germans attending the speech were grateful that Dodd expressed opinions that they could not. But senior Nazi officials were not so grateful. Goebbels blocked the speech from being published. Neurath refused to see Dodd for a prearranged meeting, which was a breach of diplomatic practices. US State Department officials also were not pleased and Dodd was rebuked by an undersecretary for giving a speech that expressed his personal opinion in a diplomatic setting. He was warned by an acquaintance that certain officials in the State were trying to oust him.

Things changed quickly when in October Hitler abruptly withdrew from the League of Nations. In a speech, Hitler claimed that Germany was a victim and would not be responsible if war erupted; rather, its "wicked enemies" would be to blame. He also announced that new elections would soon be held. Both actions indicated that Hitler was far from moderating his positions. Dodd arranged to meet face to face with Adolph Hitler on October 17, 1933.

#### Chapter 19: Matchmaker

Putzi Hanfstaengl decided that Hitler would be a much better leader if he had a new woman. He decided that Martha would be that woman and proposed that they meet.

## Analysis

## Vocabulary

salient, facades, raucous, demonic, atrocities, penchant, provocative, rebuff, demurral, rankled, convalescence, incoherent, sublime, prestige, devastating, repugnant, protocol, arbiter, propinquity, drudgery, benign, cadre, malevolent, unobtrusively, luxuriant,



contrarian, luminous, portent, complicity, discreet, suffused, renowned, perturbed, incalculable, penchant, quotidian, clamor, aspiration, intervals, manifestation, fanatical, omnipotence, annihilation, contingent, regime, callousness, apparition, insolence, livid, atomized, vibrant, ostensible, immersed, dint, flippant, obliquely, permeate, innocuous, groundswell, verbatim, histrionics, intermittent, unsavory, neuter



## Part IV: How the Skeleton Aches

### Summary

#### Chapter 20: The Fuhrer's Kiss

Hitler's physical presence was unimpressive, a stark difference from when he spoke before a crowd. Hitler assured Dodd that Americans would no longer be attacked. Hitler was sent into a rage when asked about his withdrawal from the League of Nations. He bitterly complained about the French, who he claimed wanted to maintain a superiority over the Germans. Hitler indicated that further incidents on the French/German border might result in his call for an international conference rather than in military action-- unless the German people insisted. Dodd reported to the State Department that the hope of world peace was better than he thought, but Messersmith did not believe Hitler's words.

Putzi, Martha and Jan Kiepura, a Polish man, arranged to meet Hitler for lunch. Hitler and his entourage sat at a different table. After a short while, Hitler sent word that he would meet with Martha. Martha was not impressed with Hitler physically other than his light blue hypnotic eyes. No relationship developed between Hitler and Martha, but she didn't care. She was soon preoccupied with the return of Diels, who was brought back to Berlin as a colonel in the SS.

#### Chapter 21: The Trouble with George

Dodd was finally realizing he had little or no impact on the activities and goals of Hitler and the Third Reich. Most disturbing was the Nazi obsession with maintaining the pure German race. Abortions were only allowed if there was an expected offspring with a mix of German and Jewish or colored blood. The Germans were busy turning their bizarre obsessions into laws. Conflicts within the US embassy and State Department became more intense. Undersecretary Phillips, who Dodd reported to, was unhappy with Dodd's open criticism about the exorbitant amount of money spent by the State Department. Dodd began to resent Messersmith, who he thought was after his job.

#### Chapter 22: The Witness Wore Jackboots

Martha attended the "great Reichstag Building arson trial" courtesy of Diels. The trial was designed to provide the Nazis with a world stage where they could publicly condemn the evils of communism who were being blamed for starting the fire. Goring was scheduled to be the star witness. As expected, Goring's testimony was dramatic. He aggressively asserted that the communists who were on trial were responsible for the fire. The defense blamed Goring for preventing the police from conducting a thorough investigation to find the real perpetrators. Goring became enraged and threatened the defense counsel, who was removed from court as the gallery applauded.



What the trial proved to the world was that the Third Reich fixed the outcome of trials despite evidence to the contrary.

#### Chapter 23: Boris Dies Again

Boris and Martha saw each other often. On one trip, they stopped at an old church that had a graphic depiction of the Crucifixion. She was disturbed by Boris' mockery of Christ. He also ridiculed those who were willing to die for their beliefs.

#### Chapter 24: Getting Out the Vote

November 12th was the day the referendum vote on Hitler's withdrawal from the League of Nations was scheduled for. The ballot was loaded with Nazis and the voters basically were given no choices. Hitler planned on a rousing endorsement. The Nazis went to extraordinary measures to get people to vote. Of the 45.1 million qualified voters, 96.5 percent did so and of that number 95.1 percent voted in favor of Hitler's foreign policy. Dodd reported to Roosevelt that the vote had been a farce. After officials of the State Department met with the Soviet commissar for foreign affairs, Dodd was scheduled for his first meeting at the Soviet embassy.

#### Chapter 25: The Secret Boris

The relationship between Martha and Boris grew in intensity despite the fact that she was still dating others--a fact that drove Boris mad. Strangely, Martha still tried to see the bright side of the Nazi revolution. He expressed his undying love for her but she confronted him with the fact that he was married and confessed that she was as well. Boris claimed to be separated from his wife and Martha told him that she was legally separated from her husband. Martha realized that she had fallen deeply for this man, despite her struggles not to.

#### Chapter 26: The Little Press Ball

In November, the Foreign Press Association in Berlin held the annual "Little Press Ball", to which many dignitaries, diplomats and other prominent individuals were invited. The Dodd family sat at the main table where Hitler's vice-chancellor, Franz von Papen, was also seated. Sigrid Schultz sat across from Papen, an uncomfortable positioning since they hated each other. Dodd viewed Papen with distaste since he was allegedly responsible for bombing railroads and various other acts of sabotage.

Schultz riled Papen by questioning him about German's mistakes in World War I. Dodd joined in and commented that the US had only entered World War I due to the stupidity of German diplomacy. Bella Fromm also attended the ball but was distracted over worry about her friend Baroness Poulette von Huhn, who lost her position as a prominent columnist because she was a Jew. After the ball, Bella rushed to her house when her maid said she didn't want to be disturbed. She had been so despondent that Bella feared she may have committed suicide. Bella found Poulette in her bed, barely able to breathe. Two empty vials of a barbiturate were by her bedside, along with a note stating she couldn't go on without her career. A doctor was called in but it was too late. An





official called Bella the next day to inform her that Poulette had died of pneumonia. Bella knew better, but pneumonia was listed as the cause of death.

Chapter 27: O Tannenbaum

It was almost Christmas and it was freezing cold. An American, Erwin Wollstein, was arrested for having made disparaging comments about Germany months before. Dodd was still the victim of a campaign in the State Department to oust him. State was filling open positions in Berlin with individuals who had greater political influence than Dodd. Praise was being heaped on Messersmith. Dodd was informed by Louis Lochner, an AP reporter he was friendly with, that all but one of the defendants in the arson trial would be acquitted. Goring was still fuming over the defense attorney's perceived insolence toward him and Goring wanted him assassinated. Dodd approved the reporter's plan to plant the story ahead of time and thus scuttle the assassination attempt. The plan worked and the murder was averted. Dodd suspected that Rudolph Diels had revealed the plot. Dodd had come to feel that Diels was a man of integrity despite his high position with the Nazis.

## Analysis

## Vocabulary

nonentity, indolent, plebeian, incursion, inexorably, redundancy, umbrage, jackboots, volatile, flamboyant, harangue, charismatic, forays, artifact, parody, uncannily, armaments, referendum, apparatus, imperialistic, madcap, phenomena, perceptibly, milieu, supercharged, boisterous, elucidate, cherubic, consummate, leavened, opulence, debauchery, motif, heresy, pagan, atheist, conjecture



# 1934, Part V: Disquiet

## Summary

### Chapter 28: January 1934

On January 9, the primary defendant in the Reichstag arson trial, Marinus van der Lubbe, was told that he would be beheaded the next day. After the execution, Germany seemed to be more stable. Hitler did not seem as insane and showed signs of cooperation with other nations. Anthony Eden, a British official, met with Hitler and felt he wanted peace. The economy was improving and unemployment was declining. But many of the improvements were just superficial and propaganda stunts. A representative of the Quakers visited Dachau and reported that the camp seemed better than most. But outward appearances were deceiving. Dachau became the model for the systematic abuse that would become standard in other camps.

Germany also tried to portray that their persecution of Jews had eased. However, although superficially violence had abated, more subtle oppression became widespread. More Jews were losing jobs and were being banned from neighborhoods. German boys and girls were made to practice throwing hand grenades. Hitler was on a tear against his own inner circle. He came to believe that Rohm, a member of his cabinet, was a homosexual, and ordered Diels to murder him. Diels apparently refused to kill him. Things appeared cozy when President Hindenburg issued a congratulatory message to Hitler for the advancements of Germany since he became chancellor.

### Chapter 29: Sniping

Undersecretary Phillips was still unhappy with Dodd and his "honesty" about overspending. Phillips wrote Dodd accusing him of mismanagement. Dodd wrote a private communication to FDR recommending that Phillips be removed from his post in the State. He accused Phillips of favoritism in conducting his responsibilities.

### Chapter 30: Premonition

Martha had a romantic evening with Boris. He took her to one of the most exclusive restaurants in Berlin and then spent the rest of the evening in the opulence of the Soviet embassy. Boris professed his love for her and told her of his harsh childhood and how he wanted more for his children. Martha had a strange foreboding that Boris' involvement with her was placing him in a dangerous position.

### Chapter 31: Night Terrors

Terror was gripping the city, even at night. People lost sleep, fearing that they may speak out in their sleep about their hatred for Hitler and that such comments would be reported to the Gestapo. Jews lived under constant fear of arrest. Rudolph Diels confirmed to Martha the reality of Germany's growing culture of surveillance. To prove



his claim, he showed her recording equipment in his office. Dodd knew the phone was tapped and mail was intercepted but he was shocked to learn that the "walls had ears". The Dodds, like everyone else, became paranoid in their own home. They began communicating with each other through notes or have conversations on walks in the Tiergarten. Martha had to be particularly careful because of the diversity of her friends and lovers. Martha's paranoia at times escalated to sheer terror when she was certain she heard boots on the ground outside her window.

#### Chapter 32: Storm Warning

Hitler declared that Germany needed more room to expand and suggested that military actions may be necessary. The conflict between Hitler and Rohm continued. Hitler humiliated Rohm by demoting his unit to a border control function. At a meeting after, the furious Rohm commented that the best thing for Germany was to be free of Hitler. The comment made its way back to Hitler who said, "We'll have to let the thing ripen." (p. 230)

#### Chapter 33: Memorandum of a Conversation with Hitler

Several serious incidents occurred just before the Dodds were to depart on their leave. Neurath demanded that a mock trial of Hitler scheduled to take place in New York City be stopped, warning that diplomatic relations would be stressed if not. Dodd informed the minister that free speech was not suppressed in America and that the Germans had brought it on themselves by the violence that continued against Americans and Jews. Although there were some attempts to discourage the trial, it went off as scheduled.

The second matter Dodd had to deal with was another face-to-face meeting with Hitler. The two men began by discussing the "Jewish problem". Hitler blamed the Jews for the bad feeling Americans were beginning to have for Germany. Dodd suggested a refugee program could solve the problem for Germany but Hitler rejected the idea, proclaiming it wouldn't work. Dodd told Hitler that Americans feared that Germany was heading to war but Hitler claimed the Germans wanted peace. Dodd sailed to America while the Germans still fumed over the mock trial. Secretary Hull issued an icy response defending America's citizens and their right to free speech. Though pressure was increasing, Roosevelt was still reluctant to speak out about the Jewish persecution by the Nazis.

#### Chapter 34: Diels, Afraid

Diels' position was becoming increasingly threatened and he feared for his future. Diels asked Goring for a leave, claiming he was sick. But when Goring insisted he be confined to his home without outside contact, he fled the country for Switzerland. Diels told Martha he was in danger because he knew too much.

#### Chapter 35: Confronting the Club

Dodd told the reporters who greeted him on his arrival that war was not in the near future. The German vice consul in New York met the ship, bearing a letter for Roosevelt



from Hitler. The next day, Dodd met with State Department officials attempting to draft an appropriate response to Hitler's letter. Hitler was inferring there were similarities between he and Roosevelt and concurring in that inference--that Roosevelt was becoming a Fascist--was obviously not an option. There was unease in US Jewish communities which Dodd responded to by asking Jewish leaders to try to quiet things. Dodd gave a speech encouraging diplomats to live frugally while abroad. Although he was given a round of applause, the hostility for Dodd only increased among top officials of the State Department. Dodd knew about their reaction and rather enjoyed it.

#### Chapter 36: Saving Diels

Diels grew more panicked. He asked Martha to intercede for him. She asked Messersmith to meet with Goring. But Messersmith was reluctant because he found Martha and her many affairs revolting. At first he refused to help, but reconsidered because Diels was the most decent fellow in the entire Regime. He met with Goring and informed him that a credible source told him that Himmler intended to assassinate Diels. That very afternoon, Diels was out of danger when he was named the regional commissioner of Cologne and the Gestapo would be headed by Himmler. In a conversation with a British official, Diels later commented that the abuse conducted by the Nazi Regime was immoral.

In April, Hindenburg fell very ill. Hitler plotted to take over the presidency upon the old president's death. Rohm was still vying for control of the military and was outspoken about his displeasure with the direction of the party. He was put on leave for the entire month of July. The Gestapo became even more violent after Diels left. Under Himmler and his protege, Reinhard Heydrich, no limits were placed on their actions.

#### Chapter 37: Watchers

Due to Martha's relationship with Boris Winogradov, by April his Soviet superiors felt she was ripe for recruitment to work for them.

#### Chapter 38: Humbugged

While Dodd was on leave, he feared that his enemies in the State Department would become more aggressive in trying to oust him. Even lower level employees were gossiping about him. There was a scathing article about Dodd in Fortune magazine that referred to him as a cheapskate. The article contended that he was weak and his words were ignored. After visiting his farm and attending meetings at the State Department, Dodd sailed in May for his return trip to Europe. When he returned, he immediately sensed a new tenseness in the air.



## Analysis

## Vocabulary

fastidious, gory, obstinately, dormant, blatant, supercilious, angst, tryst, resplendent, samovar, irrepressible, miasma, constraint, contagion, amorphous, salient, pre-military, decisive, malicious, tantamount, prudent, acrimonious, tenable, implausibly, quarantine, presumable, pricking, conjuring, quintessence, perturbed, repugnant, jettison, ominous, infliction, sadists, sentiments, wane, cadge, cheapskate, aplomb, parables, restorative



## Part VI: Berlin at Dusk

### Summary

#### Chapter 39: Dangerous Dining

Messersmith was named the US Ambassador to Austria. He was delighted and Dodd was happy to see him go. At a going away party for him, Putzi complained about Messersmith and Roosevelt siding with the Jews. He revealed that Rohm wanted to control the army and air force. At another dinner party that Rohm attended, conversation focused on the conflict between he and Hitler. The Gestapo learned of the dinner, which became infamous. Four of the dinner guests were later murdered, one fled the country under the threat of death and another was imprisoned in a concentration camp. Hans Dieckhoff, a foreign minister, told Dodd that he thought Hitler would soon be overthrown. Dodd thought the minister's words were dangerous.

#### Chapter 40: A Writer's Request

Martha was invited to a luncheon with the writer, Rudolf Ditzen. Ditzen, like many artists, tried to stay out of Hitler's sight, hoping that he would be toppled. Ditzen spoke of the difficulties writers were experiencing in Hitler's Germany. They had to avoid certain words and phrases and their work was subject to censure. Ditzen became a controversial figure, mainly due to his failure to stand up to the Nazis. He did admit that his capitulations to the Nazis took a toll on his writing. Martha began to see more clearly Nazi oppression. She began to express an interest in the Hitler regime's greatest enemy, the Soviet Union. Against her parents' wishes, she planned a trip to the Soviet Union. Dodd continued to report evidence of Germany's decline.

#### Chapter 41: Trouble at the Neighbor's

Early in June, the Dodds noticed a new addition to their neighborhood. Armed soldiers were not stationed everywhere on rooftops.

#### Chapter 42: Hermann's Toys

Dodd and his peers in the diplomatic corps genuinely believed that Hitler and his Nazis could not last much longer. He saw the leaders as inept and juvenile. The adolescent behavior of Goring was epitomized during a gathering he held on his farm. He paraded a bison, swans and his blond "private secretary" around on the grounds like they were his toys.

#### Chapter 43: A Pygmy Speaks

One year after Dodd became Ambassador, there were strong rumors of Hitler's collapse. A speech that was written for Vice-Chancellor Papen to deliver at Marburg University was filled with reproaches to Hitler's regime. He spoke of its arrogance and



insincerity and the need to establish a better relationship with the people. When he proclaimed that it was time "to silence doctrinaire fanatics", (p. 285) the audience reacted with wild applause and cheering. Hitler was not pleased and issued a not so subtle warning to Papen to get back in line. The speech was banned from the airwaves. Papen struck back and threatened to go to Hindenburg for authorization to publish his speech. Hindenburg warned Hitler that he would declare martial law if he could not get things under control.

#### Chapter 44: The Message in the Bathroom

The residence of Edgar Jung, Papen's speechwriter, was ransacked. One word was scrawled on the medicine chest in his bathroom: Gestapo. Goring warned Diels to watch himself for the next few days. Diels fled to the Eifel Mountains.

#### Chapter 45: Mrs. Cerruti's Distress

Conditions in Berlin were becoming more tense by the day. There was tension in the Dodd house over Martha's plans to visit Russia. In July, she visited Leningrad and Moscow. Her relationship with Boris deepened. The Dodds hosted a lunch to which Elisabetta Cerruti, wife of the Italian ambassador, was invited. Also attending the lunch was Papen and Germany's ambassador to the US, Hans Luther. Mrs. Cerruti later noted the tension at the luncheon. When she made an offhand remark about the weather - "something terrible is going to happen in Germany. I feel it in the air," - those attending applied an entirely different meaning to it.

#### Chapter 46: Friday Night

On Friday evening, July 29, 1934, Hitler learned that Papen intended to meet with Hindenburg to rein in Hitler's power. This news emerged amid other rumors that Rohm was planning a coup and the suspicious actions of another commander, Karl Ernst. Hitler had Goebbels contact Goring to give him the code word to launch the Berlin phase of Hitler's power grab.

#### Chapter 47: "Shoot, Shoot!"

The next morning, Martha and Boris went on a picnic by the Kleiner Wannsee Lake. At the same time, Hitler, accompanied by armed men, stormed the hotel room where Rohm was staying. Hitler informed Rohm that he was under arrest. In Berlin that same morning, Frederick Birchall, a New York Times reporter, received a call that a "lot of people are being shot". (p. 305) Gunshots were being heard around various towns and villages. Rohm was incarcerated but Hitler was reluctant to have him shot. Hans Gisevius, an author, overheard Goring shouting orders to Gestapo officers to "shoot", followed by raucous laughter. Dodd heard the commotion going on and the gunshots. He was terrified most of all for his daughter who was with Boris, a Soviet and enemy of Germany.

#### Chapter 48: Guns in the Park



Martha and Boris stayed at the lake all day, not returning until after six that evening. When they returned, they noticed that there were less people on the streets and those who were outside seemed to be gathered in groups. The Tiergarten was lined with armed soldiers. At home, her brother told her martial law had been declared and that General Schleicher and his wife had been shot to death. Her father was at the embassy attempting to send a message to the State Department. They received phone calls that assassination squads were roaming the streets and learned that hundreds of officials had been murdered. Dodd feared that Papen had been among them.

#### Chapter 49: The Dead

Berlin's foreign correspondents were called by Goring to a press conference on Saturday afternoon. Goring blamed the recent violence on leaders who had strayed from the goals of the movement. General Schleicher had been plotting against the regime. The exact number killed was disputed with figures as low as 40 to as high as 1,000. Serious conflicts arose between the SS and the military. At least five Jews had been shot for just being Jews. Putzi was in America at the reunion of his Harvard class. When he found out what was going on in Germany, he publicly defended Hitler but privately feared for his life and that of his wife and child. In a radio address, Goring lied that peace had been restored in Germany. He praised Hitler and tied the people's destiny to him.

#### Chapter 50: Among the Living

Papen was alive but under house arrest. Dodd was disgusted by the execution of men without warrant or trial. By that weekend, word spread that Rohm was dead. Rohm was given a Browning automatic revolver and the opportunity to commit suicide. When he was alive ten minutes later, the Browning was removed from him and he was shot to death. The man who killed him, Theodor Eicke, was given a promotion as head of all concentration camps.

#### Chapter 51: Sympathy's End

The Dodds went ahead with their planned July 4th celebration at the embassy, to which 300 guests had been invited. Martha and Bill asked some of the younger guests if they were "lebst du noch," or "still alive". Some of the Nazi guests didn't like the comment. Hitler enacted an emergency law that made all the recent murders legal. Papen's son Fritz told Martha that Papen's close relationship with Hindenburg had saved his life. The State Department still would not issue a warning to Americans traveling to Germany. Secretary Hull was upset with Dodd because he didn't think he was aggressive enough in seeing to it that some of the German debt was repaid. Dodd hoped that the murders would so outrage the German public that Hitler's regime would collapse. Dodd began to cut off ties with all Nazis.

#### Chapter 52: Only the Horses

Hitler addressed the nation on July 13th. Dodd refused to attend the speech but listened on the radio. Hitler described a plot by Rohm and others and that the actions the Nazis





took was to thwart a revolution. Hitler claimed throughout his speech that his first duty was to Germany and its people. Dodd indicated his disgust in a report to Secretary Hull. The twenty-four hours of murder would come to be known as "The Night of the Long Knives". Many people, including the American administration, tended, or at least pretended, to believe Hitler's explanation. Germany's state controlled press, not surprisingly, praised Hitler. Hindenburg died on August 2nd, at which time Hitler named himself Fuhrer and Reich Chancellor. Dodd predicted Germany would follow an even darker path. In his diary, Dodd made the observation that dogs and horses always looked healthy and robust and were never abused.

#### Chapter 53: Juliet #2

Martha traveled to Russia again, but this time without Boris. Martha was upset with his abandonment of her and hinted that she may renew other relationships. Martha returned to Berlin and Boris was soon transferred to Warsaw. But Martha was in love with Boris and petitioned Stalin for permission to marry him. It is unknown if Stalin ever saw the request, but Soviet intelligence was still interested in recruiting Martha. Boris was less enthused about marrying Martha and dragged his feet. He sometimes referred to Martha as "Juliet 2", indicating that he had another lover.

#### Chapter 54: A Dream of Love

Roosevelt agreed with Dodd's assessment that "German authorities are preparing for a great continental struggle". (p. 340). However, the majority of Americans did not want to get involved in a European war. Dodd began to withdraw further from any active engagement with Hitler's Third Reich. The Germans were marching toward war and their persecution of Jews intensified. Dodd thought of resigning, but Dodd's exemplary work ethic prevented him from abandoning ship. He did take a leave in late July to return to the States and meet with Roosevelt.

Dodd was showing signs of a serious physical disorder. He had constant headaches and digestive problems. Others noticed that his memos were rambling and almost incoherent. A critical memo written by Dodd about the Germans was leaked to the press, enraging the Germans who let it be known that they would like him removed as ambassador. Dodd asked Roosevelt to allow him to stay on until the next spring. Dodd returned to Berlin and was notified in November that he would officially leave his post at the end of December. Martha left for home, too. Her relationship with Boris was officially over. She married to another man in June 1938, but she still loved Boris and told him in a letter she would leave her husband and come to him as soon as he gave the word. But Boris was dead before the letter arrived. Stalin ordered his execution. His crime--collaborating with the Nazis.

#### Chapter 55: As Darkness Fell

In a departing speech, Dodd spoke of the unlearned lessons of WWI. However, he praised the German people as basically democratic and kind. In a subsequent speech back in New York, he warned that mankind was in grave danger from the actions of the



Germans. No longer part of the State Department, Dodd felt it his duty to warn the world about Nazi aggression. Dodd retired with his wife to their farm in Virginia. That spring, Mrs. Dodd died suddenly. Martha attributed her death to the strain of living in Nazi Germany for four years. Dodd continued his one-man campaign against Nazism. In late 1938, Germany's actions finally led to a public condemnation from Roosevelt.

Dodd accidentally hit a four-year-old black girl with his car. He drove off and was later indicted for the incident. He paid a small fine and served no jail time, but his health began to quickly deteriorate after the accident. He was diagnosed with bulbar palsy, and by the end of 1939, he was confined to bed. He died in February of 1940. There were mixed feelings about Dodd's career among his peers. Some at the State Department thought he was overly provocative while many who worked directly with him in Berlin considered him brave and a hero.

American novelist, Thomas Wolfe, perhaps summed it up best: "Ambassador Dodd had helped conjure in him a renewed pride and faith in America and a belief that somehow our great future still remains". (p. 355) Dodd had lived up to Roosevelt's expectations and was a "lone beacon of American freedom and hope in a land of gathering darkness". (p. 356)

## Analysis

## Vocabulary

thrum, concomitant, metaphor, lethal, adjutant, impetus, oppression, pseudonym, reviled, capitulations, cessation, upheaval, inept, grotesque, medieval, sylvan, imminent, reciprocated, doctrinaire, cauldron, disgruntled, mollify, unperturbed, rhetoric, sojourn, coup, ensconced, melodramatic, incendiary, tryst, turbulent, nascent, commotion, confounded, abhorrent, cataclysm, bucolic, sinister, lugubrious, impudence, retrospect, provenance, machinations, revulsion, salvo, draconian, exemplary, juxtaposition, unscathed, incarceration, sycophants, abhorrent, quiescent, superficial, brandishing, ambivalent, collateral, futility, intractable, mandate, allusions, bulbar palsy, puerile, malice



# Characters

## William E. Dodd

William E. Dodd was in his middle sixties and an English professor at the University of Chicago when he learned he was a candidate for US Ambassador to Germany. Dodd was on the verge of retiring from the university. He was growing tired of the red-tape that existed at a large college and was frustrated that he had never attained a higher position there. Dodd had always been interested and intrigued by the political world and, though he tried, he had never been able to obtain a diplomatic position with the government.

Considering the potentially dangerous conditions in Berlin, there was not much competition for the ambassadorship in Germany. Franklin Delano Roosevelt had just been elected and one of the most pressing matters before him was filling that position. Dodd's name came to the president's attention and after some consideration, Roosevelt offered the position to him. Dodd and his family moved to Berlin in 1933, which was just when Adolph Hitler had been named the country's chancellor and rumors were emerging about the aggressive style and bent for violence that his supporters, the Nazi Party, was beginning to display.

Dodd served four years as the US Ambassador to Germany. Although initially he thought that conditions had been overstated by the media, he soon began to see the violence and oppression that was increasing by the day. Dodd continually warned the US State Department about the growing tensions and increasing danger that Hitler and the Nazis were posing. But the administration refused to speak out publicly to denounce Hitler because it feared a breakdown in diplomacy. The prospect of going to war in Europe was not popular among the vast majority of Americans.

Despite the dangers and his frustration in dealing with an uncooperative State Department and an administration that was keeping its head in the sand, Dodd held his position for four years. After returning to America, Dodd spoke out publicly about what was really going on in Germany and soon the whole world knew that what he was saying was the awful truth.

## Martha Dodd

Martha Dodd was William Dodd's adult daughter who accompanied her father and mother to Berlin when William Dodd accepted the position as US Ambassador to Germany. Martha was twenty-three when she left for Germany and was leaving behind an unhappy marriage and disillusionment about her prospects for a writing career.

From all accounts, Martha was quite promiscuous, and though she was still technically a married woman, she carried on affairs with many of the men she encountered in Berlin. Among them was the lead officer of the Gestapo and a Soviet diplomat. Martha



was naïve and lived life in total abandonment. She did not seem to comprehend that she was often playing with fire and putting her own father in an embarrassing and precarious position.

When Martha was cavorting with Boris, the Soviet spy, Soviet intel was encouraging Boris to recruit her to work espionage and infiltrate the Nazi ranks. Although she was never recruited to spy for the Soviets, she did ask for Stalin's permission to marry Boris. But Boris was not interested in marrying Martha. Soon after their relationship ended, Boris was assassinated by the Soviets for his possible collusion with the Nazis.

## **Adolph Hitler**

When William Dodd accepted the position of US Ambassador to Germany, Adolph Hitler had just recently been named Germany's Chancellor. Hitler's Nazi party was becoming increasingly violent and oppressive. Hitler assured Dodd that the German people wanted peace and that the nation was not a threat.

## **Franklin Delano Roosevelt**

Franklin Delano Roosevelt was just elected President of the United States in 1933. One of his first duties was to fill the vacant position of Ambassador to Germany that was located in Berlin and that no one wanted.

## **Mattie Dodd**

Mattie Dodd was William Dodd's wife. She accompanied her husband to Berlin in 1933 when he accepted the position as US Ambassador to Germany. Shortly after they returned to the US, Mattie died. Her daughter attributed her death to the stress she lived under in Germany.

## **Ernst Röhm**

Ernst Rohm was a high-ranking member of the Nazi party and head of the army. He was on a power-grab and was an arch rival of Hitler. When Hitler became the supreme leader in Germany, Rohm was given the choice of shooting himself or being assassinated. He chose the latter.

## **Paul von Hindenburg**

Paul von Hindenburg was the President of Germany in 1933 when Hitler was named the nation's Chancellor. Hindenburg was old and dying and allowed Hitler to gain power. When Hindenburg died, Hitler took full control of Germany.



## **Hermann Goring**

Herman Goring was a leading member of the Nazi party. He was in charge of propoganda and was responsible for controlling the media and prevented any speeches or news articles that criticized the Nazi party from being published.

## **Boris Winogradov**

Boris Winogradov was a Soviet diplomat and the lover of Martha Dodd, the daughter of US Ambassador to Germany William Dodd. The Soviets hoped to recruit Martha for espionage while she was involved with Boris. Boris was executed on Stalin's orders when it was felt it was colluding with the Nazis.

## **Cordell Hull**

Cordell Hull was FDR's Secretary of State during the president's first term. Hull was William Dodd's superior at the State Department and often criticized Dodd for being too vocal in his criticism of Hitler and the Nazis.



# Objects/Places

## University of Chicago

William Dodd left his post at the University of Chicago as a professor of history when he was tapped to fill the position of US Ambassador to Germany.

## Washington, D. C.

William Dodd traveled to Washington, D.C., to meet with FDR who offered him the position of US Ambassador to Germany. Dodd made several trips to Washington, D.C. while he was ambassador.

## State Department

As Ambassador to Germany, William Dodd reported to Secretary of State Cordell Hull who headed the State Department.

## Nazi Party

Adolph Hitler headed the Nazi movement in the early 1930s. At first just seen as activists for the German people, Hitler's Nazi party later became a violent and brutal regime whose actions sparked World War II.

## Berlin, Germany

William E. Dodd and his family lived in Berlin during the four years he served as US Ambassador to Germany.

## Reichstag Building Arson Trial

The Reichstag Building arson trial was a pivotal event in the establishment of the Nazi Party. Although the fire was blamed on several Soviet spies, it was felt that Nazi Party members had actually set the building on fire to cause a controversy that would build support for the Nazi movement.

## Night of Long Knives

Nazi violence and abuse escalated to a new high on June 30, 1934. After that day, Hitler came into full power and Nazi aggression soon led to the beginning of World War II. That bloody evening became known as the "Night of Long Knives".

## **Tiergarten**

The residence for the US Ambassador to Berlin was located across the street from the Tiergarten. It was a large park often compared to New York's Central Park. The literal translation of "tiergarten" is "garden of the beasts".

## **Virginia Farm**

When William Dodd retired as US Ambassador to Germany, he and his wife moved to their farm in Virginia. Unfortunately, his wife, Mattie, lived only four months at the farm before her death.

## **Marburg University**

Vice-chancellor Papen's life was in danger after he gave a speech at Marburg University in Marburg, Germany, in which he criticized violent acts committed by the Nazis.



# Themes

## Courage of Convictions

William E. Dodd, whose story is told in *In the Garden of Beasts*, was named the US Ambassador to Germany by President Franklin Delano Roosevelt at the beginning of his first term in 1933. Dodd was a man in his mid-sixties at the time and was very set in his ways and very principled. He felt that living the opulent life that most diplomats led was wrong-headed and set a very bad image for the State Department while the entire world was suffering from the Great Depression.

Even though Dodd was trying to improve the US's standing and reputation at home and abroad, his frugal lifestyle was met with criticism from the State Department and other diplomats who felt that Dodd was showing them up and forcing them to vacate their extravagant lifestyles against their will. Dodd really didn't care what the others did. He refused to spend the US taxpayer's dollar carelessly. He refused the services of a chauffeur and preferred to walk to the Embassy.

While the State Department and even the president were reluctant to speak out against Nazi aggression due to political and diplomatic concerns, Dodd gave speeches in Germany and in the US that were merely thinly disguised criticisms of Hitler and the Nazis. Dodd witnessed the growing danger firsthand every day in Germany and he feared that if Hitler gained enough strength and authority, he would spark a world war. Even though Dodd was trying to do the right thing for America and mankind, he was criticized for being too provocative and a troublemaker.

After four years as ambassador, Dodd retired. However, he felt it was his duty to publicly speak out against Hitler and the Nazi Party. It was not very long before the world realized that what Dodd had warned about for years had unfortunately come true.

## Diplomacy versus Reality

When William E. Dodd accepted the position as US Ambassador to Germany in 1933, he did not realize that in addition to establishing diplomatic ties with a European capital, he would have to develop quasi-diplomatic skills in dealing with his own State Department and even with the president of the United States. In order to stay viable and effective in the dangerous and uncertain world of pre-World War II Germany, Dodd had to learn to mollify each side.

Dodd was very concerned with image while he was serving in Berlin. Since the world was in the throes of a global depression, Dodd thought it wise to live frugally and abandon the lavish lifestyle of the diplomatic world. However, officials in the State Department felt his public discussion of his conservative way of living was a direct affront to them and the way they conducted themselves. Dodd had to learn to follow





his own ethics without insulting his colleagues which at times became quite a balancing act.

Dodd was honest in his assessment of the deterioration of Germany after Adolph Hitler and his Nazi Party continued to grow in strength. He sent numerous wires to the State Department and the president to keep them informed of the country's growing tensions. However, the State Department often rebuked him for overreacting. When violence and oppression escalated, Dodd's decision to cut ties with Nazi officials was seen as provocative by his own superiors. During the four years that Dodd served as US Ambassador to Germany, he devoted much time and effort to honestly assessing conditions while at the same time dealing with officials who criticized him for those same efforts.

## Gathering Storm

Many rumors had emerged during the the early 1930s about the turn that Germany had taken since Adolph Hitler had become the German Chancellor. The diplomatic world was privy to intelligence that the normal citizen did not have access to. This factor played a huge role in the months-long vacancy that existed for US Ambassador to Germany, a position that was located in Berlin. Those in "the know" wanted no part of Nazi Germany and Franklin Delano Roosevelt, the newly elected US president, faced a daunting task in filling that position.

Once William Dodd accepted the position, he at first found the Germans to be warm and welcoming. But it was not very long before he began to see that the speculation about Hitler and the Nazis was not just empty rhetoric. He observed that the Germans were slowly transitioning Germany into a nation that was intolerant of Jews and non-whites and that used violence instead of voting to set policy. The changes were at first subtle but nonetheless were taking place. Hitler's supporters were secretly passing laws that would prohibit Jews from holding government jobs. Later the laws were enhanced to disallow Jews from having any gainful employment or of owning property. Reports and violence and abuse were increasing.

Dodd tried to warn the State Department about the increasingly dangerous climate, but officials wanted to maintain diplomatic ties in Germany and the president was reluctant to take a stand against Hitler's actions because the America public feared involvement in a war. It was not only the Americans who allowed Hitler to strengthen his position, but also other countries and leaders. The English foreign minister met with Hitler and found him to be a man who wanted peace. The world chose to look the other way when all signs were unfolding that the most horrific regime that the world had ever known was forming right before its eyes.



# Style

## Language and Meaning

### Structure

In the Garden of Beasts is the story of William E. Dodd who was the United States Ambassador to Germany from 1933 through 1937, precisely when Adolph Hitler's ascension to power was taking place. With obvious signs of trouble brewing, diplomats were not vying for the job as US Ambassador to Germany. Filling that position was one of the first and most difficult challenges facing the the newly elected Franklin Delano Roosevelt.

William E. Dodd was a history professor at the University of Chicago where he had served for decades. Although he always had political aspirations, he was never called upon to serve his country. In 1933, Dodd was frustrated that his career at the University had really never taken off and that he had been by-passed by years for diplomatic positions within the government. He was on the verge of retiring from the university to devote his remaining years to writing when he learned he was a candidate for US Ambassador to Germany, a position which was located in Berlin.

When FDR made the offer to Dodd, he told him he'd give him only two hours to decide. After a quick discussion with his wife, he accepted the position. Dodd, his wife and his two adult children took off on an ocean liner headed for Europe. Once arriving in the German capital, the Dodds found the city intriguing and the people warm and welcoming. They had heard rumors about the violence and abuse after Adolph Hitler had become the German Chancellor but concluded that the press had been exaggerating the events.

### Perspective

In the Garden of Beasts is the story of William E. Dodd, who served the country as US Ambassador to Germany from 1933 to 1937, during the time Hitler was rising to power and Nazi aggression was threatening world peace. The book is a historic account of the Ambassador's tenure and is supported by hundreds of sources and references. The author of the book, Erik Larson, who is a national best-selling author and a master of narrative non-fiction, has written an interesting and honest account of the dawning of a historic era.

Larson, who lends his master stroke to the story of pre-World War II Germany, provides an account that appears to lack prejudice or bias. He tells the story of a relatively unknown man and a minor historic figure who must stand up against both Germany's Chancellor Adolph Hitler and must counsel the new US president who seems reluctant to denounce the violence and oppression that emerges in the years before the war.



Larson portrays Dodd as a ordinary man without money or influence who is thrown into a perilous situation which he refuses to abandon even in the face of grave danger. Dodd's story is that of an old man whose lackluster career as a history professor has ended and who planned to head for retirement. But his retirement is sidetracked when, in the autumn of his life, he is forced to become a defender of freedom and a fighter of oppression. The depiction of Dodd's life is written from a perspective which all people can relate to and appreciate.

## Tone

*In the Garden of Beasts* is a detailed account of the years spent in Berlin by William E. Dodd, the US Ambassador to Germany in the years leading up to the takeover of the country by Hitler and his Nazi Party. The story is laid out in a tone that is at once respectful to the historic figures that are part of the story and honest and straightforward, allowing the blame to fall where it may.

The manner in which the story is written is informative and clear. The clarity that the author applies to a story that is multifaceted and filled with many players whose names are difficult and foreign is appreciated. The author, Erik Larson, makes what could be a confusing and banal history lesson into an interesting story that is rife with drama and intrigue. With its cliffhanger chapter-endings, it has the pace and appeal of a suspense novel.

The story of Adolph Hitler's rise to power is a well-known and oft told story. However, Larson's ability to weave the story into an interesting tale that seems fresh holds the reader's attention. Although the story builds to an outcome that will really have no surprises, the writer is eager to learn the author's account of how the ending came about.



## Quotes

From the neck down to his heels he was a mass of raw flesh." Introduction, p. 3

With few exceptions, the men who are running this Government are of a mentality that you and I cannot understand. Some of them are psychopathic cases and would ordinarily be receiving treatment somewhere." Introduction, p. 5

Depending on one's point of view, Germany was experiencing a great revival or a savage darkening." Chap. 2, p. 16

I was slightly anti-Semitic in this sense: I accepted the attitude that Jews were not as physically attractive as Gentiles and were less socially desirable." Chap. 5, p. 41

Accustomed all my life to the free exchange of views, the atmosphere of this evening shocked me and struck me as a sort of violation of the decencies of human relationship." Chap. 18, p. 147

Berlin is a skeleton which aches in the cold. . . It is my own skeleton aching. I feel in my bones the sharp ache of the frost in the girders of the overhead railway, in the ironwork of balconies, in bridges, tramlines, lamp-standards, latrines. The iron throbs and shrinks, the stone and the bricks ache dully, the plaster is numb." Chap. 27, p. 194

A popular metaphor used at the time to describe the atmosphere in Berlin was that of an approaching thunderstorm--that sense of charged and suspended air." Chap. 39, p. 263

It may be superstitious belief, but in my eyes, any books which could be printed at all in Germany between 1933 and 1945 are worse than worthless and not objects one wishes to touch. A stench of blood and shame attaches to them. They should all be pulped." Chap. 40, p. 273

The government is well aware of the selfishness, the lack of principle, the insincerity, the unchivalrous behavior, the arrogance which is on the increase under the guise of the German revolution." Chap. 43, p. 284

Shoot them! Take a whole company. Shoot them. . .shoot them at once!" Chap. 47, p. 307

Hitler returned to Berlin that evening. . .Hitler's plane appeared 'against the background of a blood-red sky, a piece of theatricality that no one had staged.'" Chap. 49, p. 317

If I am to be killed, let Adolph do it himself." Chap. 50, p. 320



## Topics for Discussion

### Topic for Discussion 560971

What inspired the title of the book? What is the significance of the title and why is it fitting? What location in Berlin was compared to a famous locale in New York City?

### Topic for Discussion 560972

Why did Messersmith feel alone in his view of Germany's political and social transformation? What was FDR's initial stance on Germany's treatment of their citizens, especially the Jews? What view did Dodd have on the Nazis? How did it differ from his official stand?

### Topic for Discussion 560973

What were signs that Germany was deteriorating under Hitler? Why did many Americans think the press was exaggerating the state of Germany? What were signs of the coming Holocaust? What laws did the Nazis draft that impacted the lives of Jews?

### Topic for Discussion 560974

What role did the old German president, Hindenburg, have in controlling Hitler? What relationship did they have? Why was Hindenburg's death a pivotal point in Germany's march toward war?

### Topic for Discussion 560975

Who were some of the men that Martha Dodd saw on a social basis in Berlin? Why did she display poor judgment in her choice of male friends? How did the Soviets plan to exploit one of her relationships?

### Topic for Discussion 560976

What complaints did Dodd have about how the US State Department was run? Why did he want to live frugally while US ambassador to Berlin? How did his comments and attitude impact his superiors in the State Department?



## Topic for Discussion 560977

What happened during the "The Night of the Long Knives"? Why was Rohm assassinated? What option had he been given to avoid assassination?