

SOUTHERN CROSS SWASTIKA

A short screenplay
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INT. BAR - NIGHT.

A loud, crowded bar around PM.

We hear the noises of glasses clinking, voices in animated conversation. From somewhere, faint piano music.

We see very tight close ups, different shots of items in the bar.

CLOSE UP: A thick cigar resting in a chunky ash tray.

Through the clamour of voices a number of individual voices slowly emerge.

Their accents are neutral. For all purposes the audience should believe they are in contemporary Australia.

We watch as the cigar smoke curls slowly upwards and hear:

HEINRICH (O.S.)
The Olympics were important -

HERMAN (O.S.)
Important ? They were magnificent.

HEINRICH (O.S.)
The Olympics were important in terms of our progress as a nation. They were an important step in nation building.

JOSEF (O.S.)
You must learn to listen friend.

HEINRICH (O.S.)
Don't make this personal.

JOSEF (O.S.)
No. It is where he falls down and he needs to know it. If you had read my last pamphlet you would -

HERMAN (O.S.)
I am listening now.

CLOSE UP: A pint of beer being placed on a wooden bench. Some foam slips slowly down the side.

Over this the voices continue.

JOSEF (O.S.)
Our friend here has the ability to see the bigger picture. Where our current direction is taking us. The future.

HERMAN (O.S.)

Really ?

JOSEF (O.S.)

Where as you only see the
spectacle, the moment. The fun.
That is why he is the Party
secretary. That's why he won the
vote.

CLOSE UP: A wooden chair pulled slightly back from a table,
over it hangs a black coat.

HEINRICH (O.S.)

Joe. The election is over. I was
lucky enough to win. Our friend was
mature enough to accept the result
with grace. Now we must move on.
There is much to be done.

HERMAN (O.S.)

Thank you, friend.

HEINRICH (O.S.)

The Olympics. We all accept they
were an important part of the
process. Our athletes superlative
performance announced to the world
our true potential. What we can be.

CLOSE UP: A pair of shiny black shoes underneath the table.
The shoes tap slowly.

HERMAN (O.S.)

Agreed.

HEINRICH (O.S.)

The superb facilities, the
unequaled opening ceremony. It was
widely accepted as the best
Olympics ever.

JOSEF (O.S.)

To us.

HEINRICH (O.S.)

No. To our friends and supporters
everywhere.

The sound of clinking glasses.

CLOSE UP: We see a pint glass being raised to a mouth and
drunk. Then a hand wiping the mouth.

HEINRICH (O.S.)

But now we must take the next step. We have shown and continue to show our superiority on the sporting fields - but if this country is to develop. To be all that it can be. We have to be leaders now - not just followers.

HERMAN (O.S.)

But our allies -

HEINRICH (O.S.)

Our allies are only important in what they can do for us. How they can help to strengthen our position.

HERMAN (O.S.)

Dangerous talk.

JOSEF (O.S.)

We will never be truly great until we can stand alone. Proudly independent.

CLOSE UP: Another pair of man's lips, speaking animatedly. They say:

HEINRICH

True. And we have the resources and the ability to be a truly great power. But do we have the discipline. The ruthlessness.

HERMAN (O.S.)

Ruthlessness ?

The lips continue.

HEINRICH

Let's look at the current situation. It's embarrassing. A distraction.

CLOSE UP: A corner of bright red fabric, hanging on the wall.

JOSEF (O.S.)

Agreed.

HEINRICH (O.S.)

And that is why tomorrow I'm going to put to the Party another solution - as it is clear the current method is not working.

JOSEF (O.S.)

Clear.

CLOSE UP: A pair of legs in grey trousers underneath the table. They cross and uncross.

From somewhere else in the bar we hear LAUGHTER.

HEINRICH (O.S.)

The camps are not working. We put these ... people in there, indefinitely, and then what are we left with.

HERMAN (O.S.)

Tell me.

HEINRICH (O.S.)

A burden. On manpower, on resources. It's a question of economics. After all we must remember — we have a war to win.

JOSEF (O.S.)

Exactly.

HERMAN (O.S.)

So what is your solution ?

CLOSE UP: A gold cufflink on the end of a crisp white sleeve. A man's hand fidgeting with it.

HEINRICH (O.S.)

If this country is to continue it's upwards trajectory we need every dollar channelled where it is needed most. Defence, border protection, military strength. The rest of the world looks on our land with envious eyes. We must make this country impregnable. If we don't act soon — we will be over run.

HERMAN (O.S.)

And that is precisely why the centres were initiated.

HEINRICH (O.S.)

These "centres" drain vital resources. They need to be phased out.

HERMAN (O.S.)

And replaced with ?

HEINRICH (O.S.)
Not replaced. Modified.

CLOSE UP: A pair of glasses with black rims resting on a man's nose. The glasses are removed and a hand rubs the nose.

HERMAN (O.S.)
Modified ? How ?

HEINRICH (O.S.)
There have been conversations
behind closed doors friend.

JOSEF (O.S.)
You are not privy to all
discussions.

HEINRICH (O.S.)
Please Josef. We are all on the
same team. Let us take a step back.
These people do not belong here. We
have no idea for what they are
responsible. What crimes they have
committed ? Agreed ?

JOSEF & HERMAN (O.S.)
Agreed.

CLOSE UP: Fingers drum impatiently on a bench top, agitated.

JOSEF (O.S.)
They should be sent back to
wherever they came from.

HEINRICH (O.S.)
We do not need people like this in
our country. They will not help our
country prosper. Agreed ?

JOSEF & HERMAN (O.S.)
Agreed.

HEINRICH (O.S.)
We have enough problems of our own.
Agreed ?

JOSEF & HERMAN (O.S.)
Agreed.

CLOSE UP: A pint of beer being raised to a man's mouth. The glass stops. The pint is placed down again before he drinks.

HEINRICH (O.S.)
So what do we do ?

JOSEF (O.S.)
We send them back.

HEINRICH (O.S.)
 That has already proved impossible.
 Where these people come from is ...
 not somewhere we would want to
 live.

We hear Josef laugh.

HERMAN (O.S.)
 Then they must remain here.

CLOSE UP: We see a man's forehead, his eyebrows raised as if
 in intense conversation.

HEINRICH (O.S.)
 These people are primitive. Sub-
 human. You only need look at their
 faces. Suffice to say - their genes
 are not in demand. As our good
 friend Alfred pointed out.

Josef laughs again.

CLOSE UP: The collar of a well pressed white shirt.

HEINRICH (O.S.)
 Who knows what strange diseases
 they carry ? The longer they remain
 in our country - the more damage
 they can do.

HERMAN (O.S.)
 But you said we can not send them
 back.

HEINRICH (O.S.)
 There is another ... answer. There
 have been other unsuccessful
 solutions. I propose what I think
 will be a successful solution.

CLOSE UP: For the first time now we see Herman, a man in his
 mid 30s. A close up on his well rounded face and gentle eyes,
 which show concern.

HERMAN (O.S.)
 I am listening.

HEINRICH (O.S.)
 Like they themselves, their society
 is very primitive. There are no
 records, birth certificates,
 documents - like we have. Why do
 you think it is so difficult
 identifying who they are ? Where
 they came from ? In most cases they
 do not even know.

(MORE)

HEINRICH (O.S.) (cont'd)

Even the ones who have already infiltrated our communities – they have only the names we have bestowed on them.

CLOSE UP: We see Josef now, also mid 30s, a close up on his face – angular, pointy, laughing hysterically, almost like a hyena.

JOSEF

(laughing)

I believe some of them even call themselves Josef.

CLOSE UP: Back to Herman, concern growing.

HEINRICH (O.S.)

So if they do not know who they are – then how does anyone else know ? How does anyone know who actually reached our borders ? Or already lives among us ? Or if they ... perished in the attempt ? If they do not exist, no one will notice if they ... disappear.

Beat. Herman raises a pint of beer to his lips.

HERMAN

How would this be ...achieved ?

CLOSE UP: And now finally we see Heinrich, a thin face, topped with a crop of blonde hair. He is slightly older than the other two – relaxed, poised, and rolls a thick cigar in his fingers.

HEINRICH

In exactly the same way we achieved the Olympics. With efficiency, accuracy and speed. The qualities this country has become renown for worldwide. There will no longer be any need for the camps or costly, time consuming re-locations. Our problem will simply cease to ... exist.

CLOSE UP: Josef, smiling in admiration.

JOSEF

Brilliant. Brilliant.

CLOSE UP: Herman, worried now. Upset.

HERMAN

But it is ... How can we ... conceal ...

CLOSE UP: Heinrich smiling.

HEINRICH

Come, come friend. What happens within our own borders is our business — and no one else's.

CLOSE UP: Josef nodding eagerly.

CLOSE UP: Back to Heinrich.

HEINRICH

Did you not listen the other day at the meeting ? We will not be dictated to by outsiders. In our own land — we will govern. Without question.

CLOSE UP: Herman now, genuinely horrified.

HERMAN

But it is ... monstrous.

CLOSE UP: Heinrich. Beat. Suddenly he starts to laugh.

HEINRICH

(laughing)

Monstrous ? Monstrous ?

CLOSE UP: Josef joins in. The two men laugh loudly, we cut between them.

CLOSE UP: A fist pounds down on to the bench. The laughing cuts off instantly.

CLOSE UP: Heinrich, angry now.

HEINRICH

They are the monsters. Not us.

We go out a little further now. A mid-shot of Heinrich as he points at Herman.

HEINRICH

Do you not remember the atrocities they have committed against our allies ? Against us.

Heinrich pounds his finger into the bench, causing the pint glasses to wobble.

HEINRICH

And atrocities they already plan — right here and now — to inflict upon our very own soil. A short memory my friend, is a very dangerous thing.

A mid shot of Herman, still trying to comprehend.

HERMAN

But you would make us ...

A mid shot now of both Heinrich and Josef, sitting next to each other.

HEINRICH

Please. Don't be so over-dramatic.
They are not people. They are dogs.

JOSEF

Mongrel dogs.

HEINRICH

Mongrels, that infect our purity.
They need to be ... eradicated. They
have committed atrocities, now
atrocities will be committed on
them. We need no other solution.

JOSEF

It is the perfect solution.

HEINRICH

It is the final solution.

Heinrich raises his thick pint glass with handle. Josef brings his glass up to join him. They clink glasses and finish their beers.

Heinrich lowers his glass on to the table.

HEINRICH

And tomorrow I shall put it to the
party for approval.

JOSEF

You have my vote.

A mid shot of Herman, still trying to offer a note of caution.

HERMAN

Perhaps some ... caution.

Mid shot of Heinrich, he leans in to him.

HEINRICH

We need action, progress, growth.
To rid ourselves of those who would
hold us back. Not caution.

CLOSE UP: Herman's face, sweat beading on his brow.

HERMAN

And the ...children ?

CLOSE UP: Heinrich's face. He thinks for a moment. Beat.
Then:

HEINRICH
Little monsters only grow up to
become big monsters.

We hear Josef laugh off screen.

HERMAN
(to Heinrich)
What are you afraid of ?

We see Heinrich - cold, determined.

HEINRICH
I am afraid of nothing. Soon we all
will have nothing to fear.

Heinrich stands, up out of shot.

We see a two shot of Heinrich and Josef, standing to join
him.

JOSEF
Another ?

HEINRICH
No. I need to go over my speech. I
will see you at the meeting.

Heinrich offers his hand to Josef.

HEINRICH
Tomorrow.

JOSEF
Tomorrow.

Josef takes Heinrich's hand and shakes it.

Heinrich looks at Herman.

HEINRICH
Tomorrow ?

CLOSE UP: Heinrich's hand extended towards Herman, Herman's
hand hangs by his side. Beat.

HEINRICH (O.S.)
(more insistent)
Tomorrow ?

Another beat. Herman's hand moves slowly up to take
Heinrich's.

We cut back to a wider shot of the two men shaking hands.

HERMAN

Tomorrow.

Heinrich begins putting on his coat, which has been hanging over the back of chair.

HERMAN

Heinrich. One last question.

HEINRICH

Yes Herman.

HERMAN

When do you plan to begin this ...
solution ?

HEINRICH

One facility in Poland has already
been modified. Near Dachau.
Auchwitz.

Heinrich has his coat on now. We see the Nazi insignia on his sleeve.

He gives the NAZI salute.

HEINRICH

Heil Hitler.

Herman and Josef return it.

HERMAN AND JOSEF

Heil Hitler.

Heinrich nods and moves away through the bar.

Herman slowly slumps back in to his seat.

Josef laughs and slaps Herman on the back. He moves off towards the bar to get himself another beer.

Herman is left alone, around him the bar sounds begin to build.

Slowly we pull back to see the Swastika, enclosed by bright red fabric hanging off the wall behind him.

Herman is still. Fade.

End Film.