

Checkpoint

The American handed Leamas another cup of coffee and said, 'Why don't you go back and sleep? We can ring you if he shows up.'

Leamas said nothing, just stared through the window of the checkpoint, along the empty street.

'You can't wait for ever, sir. Maybe he'll come some other time. We can have the polizei contact the Agency: you can be back here in twenty minutes.'

'No,' said Leamas, 'it's nearly dark now.'

'But you can't wait for ever; he's nine hours over schedule.'

'If you want to go, go. You've been very good,' Leamas added. 'I'll tell Kramer you've been damn good.'

'But how long will you wait?'

'Until he comes.' Leamas walked to the observation window and stood between the two motionless policemen. Their binoculars were trained on the Eastern checkpoint.

'He's waiting for the dark,' Leamas muttered. 'I know he is.'

'This morning you said he'd come across with the workmen.'

Leamas turned on him.

'Agents aren't aeroplanes. They don't have schedules. He's blown, he's on the run, he's frightened. Mundt's after him,

now, at this moment. He's only got one chance. Let him choose his time.'

The younger man hesitated, wanting to go and not finding the moment.

A bell rang inside the hut. They waited, suddenly alert. A policeman said in German, 'Black Opel Rekord, Federal registration.'

'He can't see that far in the dusk, he's guessing,' the American whispered and then he added: 'How did Mundt know?'

'Shut up,' said Leamas from the window. One of the policemen left the hut and walked to the sandbag emplacement two feet short of the white demarcation which lay across the road like the base line of a tennis court. The other waited until his companion was crouched behind the telescope in the emplacement, then put down his binoculars, took his black helmet from the peg by the door and carefully adjusted it on his head. Somewhere high above the checkpoint the arclights sprang to life, casting theatrical beams on to the road in front of them.

The policeman began his commentary. Leamas knew it by heart.

'Car halts at the first control. Only one occupant, a woman. Escorted to the Vopo hut for document check.' They waited in silence.

'What's he saying?' said the American. Leamas didn't reply. Picking up a spare pair of binoculars, he gazed fixedly towards the East German controls.

'Document check completed. Admitted to the second control.'

'Mr Leamas, is this your man?' the American persisted. 'I ought to ring the Agency.'

'Wait.'

'Where's the car now? What's it doing?'

‘Currency check, Customs,’ Leamas snapped.

Leamas watched the car. There were two Vopos at the driver’s door, one doing the talking, the other standing off, waiting. A third was sauntering round the car. He stopped at the boot, then walked back to the driver. He wanted the key. He opened the boot, looked inside, closed it, returned the key and walked thirty yards up the road to where, midway between the two opposing checkpoints, a solitary East German sentry was standing, a squat silhouette in boots and baggy trousers. The two stood together talking, self-conscious in the glare of the arclight.

With a perfunctory gesture they waved the car on. It reached the two sentries in the middle of the road and stopped again. They walked round the car, stood off and talked again; finally, almost unwillingly, they let it continue across the line to the Western sector.

‘It is a man you’re waiting for, Mr Leamas?’ asked the American.

‘Yes, it’s a man.’

Pushing up the collar of his jacket, Leamas stepped outside into the icy October wind. He remembered the crowd then. It was something you forgot inside the hut, this group of puzzled faces. The people changed but the expressions were the same. It was like the helpless crowd that gathers round in a traffic accident, no one knowing how it happened, whether you should move the body. Smoke or dust rose through the beam of the arclamps, a constant shifting pall between the margins of light.

Leamas walked over to the car, and said to the woman, ‘Where is he?’

‘They came for him and he ran. He took the bicycle. They can’t have known about me.’

‘Where did he go?’

'We had a room near Brandenburg, over a pub. He kept a few things there, money, papers. I think he'll have gone there. Then he'll come over.'

'Tonight?'

'He said he would come tonight. The others have all been caught – Paul, Viereck, Ländser, Salomon. He hasn't got long.'
Leamas stared at her for a moment in silence.

'Ländser too?'

'Last night.'

A policeman was standing at Leamas' side.

'You'll have to move away from here,' he said. 'It's forbidden to obstruct the crossing point.'

Leamas half turned.

'Go to hell,' he snapped. The German stiffened, but the woman said:

'Get in. We'll drive down to the corner.'

He got in beside her and they moved slowly down the road to a side turning.

'I didn't know you had a car,' he said.

'It's my husband's,' she replied indifferently. 'Karl never told you I was married, did he?' Leamas was silent. 'My husband and I work for an optical firm. They let us over to do business. Karl only told you my maiden name. He didn't want me to be mixed up with . . . you.'

Leamas took a key from his pocket.

'You'll want somewhere to stay,' he said. His voice sounded flat. 'There's an apartment in the Albrecht-Dürer-Strasse, next to the Museum. Number 28A. You'll find everything you want. I'll telephone you when he comes.'

'I'll stay here with you.'

'I'm not staying here. Go to the flat. I'll ring you. There's no point in waiting here now.'

‘But he’s coming to this crossing point.’

Leamas looked at her in surprise.

‘He told you that?’

‘Yes. He knows one of the Vopos there, the son of his landlord. It may help. That’s why he chose this route.’

‘And he told *you* that?’

‘He trusts me. He told me everything.’

‘Christ.’

He gave her the key and went back to the checkpoint hut, out of the cold. The policemen were muttering to each other as he entered; the larger one ostentatiously turned his back.

‘I’m sorry,’ said Leamas. ‘I’m sorry I bawled you out.’ He opened a tattered briefcase and rummaged in it until he found what he was looking for: a half-bottle of whisky. With a nod the elder man accepted it, half filled each coffee mug and topped them up with black coffee.

‘Where’s the American gone?’ asked Leamas.

‘Who?’

‘The CIA boy. The one who was with me.’

‘Bed time,’ said the elder man and they all laughed.

Leamas put down his mug and said:

‘What are your rules for shooting to protect a man coming over? A man on the run.’

‘We can only give covering fire if the Vopos shoot into our sector.’

‘That means you can’t shoot until a man’s over the boundary?’

The elder man said, ‘We can’t give covering fire, Mr . . .’

‘Thomas,’ Leamas replied, ‘Thomas.’ They shook hands, the two policemen pronouncing their own names as they did so.

‘We can’t give covering fire. That’s the truth. They tell us there’d be war if we did.’

‘It’s nonsense,’ said the younger policeman, emboldened

by the whisky. 'If the Allies weren't here the Wall would be gone by now.'

'So would Berlin,' muttered the elder man.

'I've got a man coming over tonight,' said Leamas abruptly.

'Here? At this crossing point?'

'It's worth a lot to get him out. Mundt's men are looking for him.'

'There are still places where you can climb,' said the younger policeman.

'He's not that kind. He'll bluff his way through; he's got papers, if the papers are still good. He's got a bicycle.'

There was only one light in the checkpoint, a reading lamp with a green shade, but the glow of the arclights, like artificial moonlight, filled the cabin. Darkness had fallen, and with it silence. They spoke as if they were afraid of being overheard. Leamas went to the window and waited. In front of him the road and to either side the Wall, a dirty, ugly thing of breeze blocks and strands of barbed wire, lit with cheap yellow light, like the backdrop for a concentration camp. East and west of the Wall lay the unrestored part of Berlin, a half-world of ruin, drawn in two dimensions, crags of war.

That damned woman, thought Leamas, and that fool Karl who'd lied about her. Lied by omission, as they all do, agents the world over. You teach them to cheat, to cover their tracks, and they cheat you as well. He'd only produced her once, after that dinner in the Schürzstrasse last year. Karl had just had his big scoop and Control had wanted to meet him. Control always came in on success. They'd had dinner together – Leamas, Control and Karl. Karl loved that kind of thing. He turned up looking like a Sunday School boy, scrubbed and shining, doffing his hat and all respectful. Control had shaken his hand for five minutes and said: 'I want you to know how pleased we

are, Karl, damn pleased.' Leamas had watched and thought, that'll cost us another couple of hundred a year. When they'd finished dinner Control pumped their hands again, nodded significantly and, implying that he had to go off and risk his life somewhere else, got back into his chauffeur-driven car. Then Karl had laughed, and Leamas had laughed with him, and they'd finished the champagne, still laughing about Control. Afterwards they'd gone to the 'Alter Fass'; Karl had insisted on it and there Elvira was waiting for them, a forty-year-old blonde, tough as nails.

'This is my best-kept secret, Alec,' Karl had said, and Leamas was furious. Afterwards they'd had a row.

'How much does she know? Who is she? How did you meet her?' Karl sulked and refused to say. After that things went badly. Leamas tried to alter the routine, change the meeting places and the catch words, but Karl didn't like it. He knew what lay behind it and he didn't like it.

'If you don't trust her it's too late anyway,' he'd said, and Leamas took the hint and shut up. But he went carefully after that, told Karl much less, used more of the hocus-pocus of espionage technique. And there she was, out there in her car, knowing everything, the whole network, the safe house, everything; and Leamas swore, not for the first time, never to trust an agent again.

He went to the telephone and dialled the number of his flat. Frau Martha answered.

'We've got guests at the Dürer-Strasse,' said Leamas, 'a man and a woman.'

'Married?' asked Martha.

'Near enough,' said Leamas, and she laughed that frightful laugh. As he put down the receiver one of the policemen turned to him.

'Herr Thomas! Quick!' Leamas stepped to the observation window.

'A man, Herr Thomas,' the younger policeman whispered, 'with a bicycle.' Leamas picked up the binoculars.

It was Karl, the figure was unmistakable even at that distance, shrouded in an old Wehrmacht macintosh, pushing his bicycle. He's made it, thought Leamas, he must have made it, he's through the document check, only currency and Customs to go. Leamas watched Karl lean his bicycle against the railing, walk casually to the Customs hut. Don't overdo it, he thought. At last Karl came out, waved cheerfully to the man on the barrier, and the red and white pole swung slowly upwards. He was through, he was coming towards them, he had made it. Only the Vop in the middle of the road, the line and safety.

At that moment Karl seemed to hear some sound, sense danger; he glanced over his shoulder, began to pedal furiously, bending low over the handlebars. There was still the lonely sentry on the bridge, and he had turned and was watching Karl. Then, totally unexpected, the searchlights went on, white and brilliant, catching Karl and holding him in their beam like a rabbit in the headlights of a car. There came the see-saw wail of a siren, the sound of orders wildly shouted. In front of Leamas the two policemen dropped to their knees, peering through the sandbagged slits, deftly flicking the rapid load on their automatic rifles.

The East German sentry fired, quite carefully, away from them, into his own sector. The first shot seemed to thrust Karl forward, the second to pull him back. Somehow he was still moving, still on the bicycle, passing the sentry, and the sentry was still shooting at him. Then he sagged, rolled to the ground, and they heard quite clearly the clatter of the bike as it fell. Leamas hoped to God he was dead.

The Circus

He watched the Tempelhof runway sink beneath him.

Leamas was not a reflective man and not a particularly philosophical one. He knew he was written off – it was a fact of life which he would henceforth live with, as a man must live with cancer or imprisonment. He knew there was no kind of preparation which could have bridged the gap between then and now. He met failure as one day he would probably meet death, with cynical resentment and the courage of a solitary. He'd lasted longer than most; now he was beaten. It is said a dog lives as long as its teeth; metaphorically, Leamas' teeth had been drawn; and it was Mundt who had drawn them.

Ten years ago he could have taken the other path – there were desk jobs in that anonymous government building in Cambridge Circus which Leamas could have taken and kept till he was God knows how old; but Leamas wasn't made that way. You might as well have asked a jockey to become a totalisator clerk as expect Leamas to abandon operational life for the tendentious theorising and clandestine self-interest of Whitehall. He had stayed on in Berlin, conscious that Personnel had marked his file for review at the end of every year – stubborn, wilful, contemptuous of instruction, telling

himself that something would turn up. Intelligence work has one moral law – it is justified by results. Even the sophistry of Whitehall paid court to that law, and Leamas got results. Until Mundt came.

It was odd how soon Leamas had realised that Mundt was the writing on the wall.

Hans-Dieter Mundt, born forty-two years ago in Leipzig. Leamas knew his dossier, knew the photograph on the inside of the cover; the blank, hard face beneath the flaxen hair; knew by heart the story of Mundt's rise to power as second man in the Abteilung and effective head of operations. Mundt was hated even within his own department. Leamas knew that from the evidence of defectors, and from Riembeck, who as a member of the SED Praesidium sat on security committees with Mundt, and dreaded him. Rightly as it turned out, for Mundt had killed him.

Until 1959 Mundt had been a minor functionary of the Abteilung, operating in London under the cover of the East German Steel Mission. He returned to Germany in a hurry after murdering two of his own agents to save his skin and was not heard of for more than a year. Quite suddenly he re-appeared at the Abteilung's headquarters in Leipzig as head of the Ways and Means Department, responsible for allocating currency, equipment and personnel for special tasks. At the end of that year came the big struggle for power within the Abteilung. The number and influence of Soviet liaison officers were drastically reduced, several of the old guard were dismissed on ideological grounds and three men emerged: Fiedler as head of counter-intelligence, Jahn took over from Mundt as head of facilities, and Mundt himself got the plum – deputy director of operations – at the age of forty-one. Then the new style began. The first agent Leamas lost was a girl. She

was only a small link in the network; she was used for courier jobs. They shot her dead in the street as she left a West Berlin cinema. The police never found the murderer and Leamas was at first inclined to write the incident off as unconnected with her work. A month later a railway porter in Dresden, a discarded agent from Peter Guillam's network, was found dead and mutilated beside a railway track. Leamas knew it wasn't coincidence any longer. Soon after that two members of another network under Leamas' control were arrested and summarily sentenced to death. So it went on: remorseless and unnerving.

And now they had Karl, and Leamas was leaving Berlin as he had come – without a single agent worth a farthing. Mundt had won.

Leamas was a short man with close, iron-grey hair, and the physique of a swimmer. He was very strong. This strength was discernible in his back and shoulders, in his neck, and in the stubby formation of his hands and fingers.

He had a utilitarian approach to clothes, as he did to most other things, and even the spectacles he occasionally wore had steel rims. Most of his suits were of artificial fibre, none of them had waistcoats. He favoured shirts of the American kind with buttons on the points of the collars, and suede shoes with rubber soles.

He had an attractive face, muscular, and a stubborn line to his thin mouth. His eyes were brown and small; Irish, some said. It was hard to place Leamas. If he were to walk into a London club the porter would certainly not mistake him for a member; in a Berlin night club they usually gave him the best table. He looked like a man who could make trouble, a man who looked after his money, a man who was not quite a gentleman.

The air hostess thought he was interesting. She guessed he was North Country, which he might have been, and rich, which he was not. She put his age at fifty, which was about right. She guessed he was single, which was half true. Somewhere long ago there had been a divorce; somewhere there were children, now in their teens, who received their allowance from a rather odd private bank in the City.

‘If you want another whisky,’ said the air hostess, ‘you’d better hurry. We shall be at London airport in twenty minutes.’

‘No more.’ He didn’t look at her; he was looking out of the window at the grey-green fields of Kent.

Fawley met him at the airport and drove him to London.

‘Control’s pretty cross about Karl,’ he said, looking sideways at Leamas. Leamas nodded.

‘How did it happen?’ asked Fawley.

‘He was shot. Mundt got him.’

‘Dead?’

‘I should think so, by now. He’d better be. He nearly made it. He should never have hurried, they couldn’t have been sure. The Abteilung got to the checkpoint just after he’d been let through. They started the siren and a Vopo shot him twenty yards short of the line. He moved on the ground for a moment, then lay still.’

‘Poor bastard.’

‘Precisely,’ said Leamas.

Fawley didn’t like Leamas, and if Leamas knew he didn’t care. Fawley was a man who belonged to clubs and wore representative ties, pontificated on the skills of sportsmen and assumed a service rank in office correspondence. He thought Leamas suspect, and Leamas thought him a fool.

‘What section are you in?’ asked Leamas.

'Personnel.'

'Like it?'

'Fascinating.'

'Where do I go now? On ice?'

'Better let Control tell you, old boy.'

'Do you know?'

'Of course.'

'Then why the hell don't you tell me?'

'Sorry, old man,' Fawley replied, and Leamas suddenly very nearly lost his temper. Then he reflected that Fawley was probably lying anyway.

'Well, tell me one thing, do you mind? Have I got to look for a bloody flat in London?'

Fawley scratched at his ear. 'I don't think so, old man, no.'

'No? Thank God for that.'

They parked near Cambridge Circus, at a parking meter, and went together into the hall.

'You haven't got a pass, have you? You'd better fill in a slip, old man.'

'Since when have we had passes? McCall knows me as well as his own mother.'

'Just a new routine. Circus is growing, you know.'

Leamas said nothing, nodded at McCall and got into the lift without a pass.

Control shook his hand rather carefully, like a doctor feeling the bones.

'You must be awfully tired,' he said apologetically, 'do sit down.' That same dreary voice, the donnish bray.

Leamas sat down in a chair facing an olive-green electric fire with a bowl of water balanced on the top of it.

'Do you find it cold?' Control asked. He was stooping

over the fire rubbing his hands together. He wore a cardigan under his black jacket, a shabby brown one. Leamas remembered Control's wife, a stupid little woman called Mandy who seemed to think her husband was in the Coal Board. He supposed she had knitted it.

'It's so dry, that's the trouble,' Control continued. 'Beat the cold and you parch the atmosphere. Just as dangerous.' He went to the desk and pressed a button. 'We'll try and get some coffee,' he said. 'Ginnie's on leave, that's the trouble. They've given me some new girl. It really is too bad.'

He was shorter than Leamas remembered him: otherwise, just the same. The same affected detachment, the same donnish conceits; the same horror of draughts; courteous according to a formula miles removed from Leamas' experience. The same milk-and-water smile, the same elaborate diffidence, the same apologetic adherence to a code of behaviour which he pretended to find ridiculous. The same banality.

He brought a packet of cigarettes from the desk and gave one to Leamas.

'You're going to find these more expensive,' he said, and Leamas nodded dutifully. Slipping the cigarettes into his pocket, Control sat down. There was a pause; finally Leamas said:

'Riemeck's dead.'

'Yes, indeed,' Control declared, as if Leamas had made a good point. 'It is very unfortunate. Most . . . I suppose that girl blew him – Elvira?'

'I suppose so.' Leamas wasn't going to ask him how he knew about Elvira.

'And Mundt had him shot,' Control added.

'Yes.'

Control got up and drifted round the room looking for an

ash-tray. He found one and put it awkwardly on the floor between their two chairs.

‘How did you feel? When Riemeck was shot, I mean? You saw it, didn’t you?’

Leamas shrugged. ‘I was bloody annoyed,’ he said.

Control put his head on one side and half closed his eyes. ‘Surely you felt more than that? Surely you were upset? That would be more natural.’

‘I was upset. Who wouldn’t be?’

‘Did you like Riemeck – as a man?’

‘I suppose so,’ said Leamas helplessly. ‘There doesn’t seem much point in going into it,’ he added.

‘How did you spend the night, what was left of it, after Riemeck had been shot?’

‘Look, what is this?’ Leamas asked hotly. ‘What are you getting at?’

‘Riemeck was the last,’ Control reflected, ‘the last of a series of deaths. If my memory is right it began with the girl, the one they shot in Wedding, outside the cinema. Then there was the Dresden man, and the arrests at Jena. Like the ten little niggers. Now Paul, Viereck and Ländser – all dead. And finally Riemeck.’ He smiled deprecatingly; ‘That is quite a heavy rate of expenditure. I wondered if you’d had enough.’

‘What do you mean – enough?’

‘I wondered whether you were tired. Burnt out.’ There was a long silence.

‘That’s up to you,’ Leamas said at last.

‘We have to live without sympathy, don’t we? That’s impossible, of course. We act it to one another, all this hardness; but we aren’t like that really. I mean . . . one can’t be out in the cold all the time; one has to come in from the cold . . . d’you see what I mean?’

Leamas saw. He saw the long road outside Rotterdam, the long straight road beside the dunes, and the stream of refugees moving along it; saw the little aeroplane miles away, the procession stop and look towards it; and the plane coming in, nearly over the dunes; saw the chaos, the meaningless hell, as the bombs hit the road.

'I can't talk like this, Control,' Leamas said at last. 'What do you want me to do?'

'I want you to stay out in the cold a little longer.' Leamas said nothing, so Control went on: 'The ethic of our work, as I understand it, is based on a single assumption. That is, we are never going to be aggressors. Do you think that's fair?'

Leamas nodded. Anything to avoid talking.

'Thus we do disagreeable things, but we are *defensive*. That, I think, is still fair. We do disagreeable things so that ordinary people here and elsewhere can sleep safely in their beds at night. Is that too romantic? Of course, we occasionally do very wicked things.' He grinned like a schoolboy. 'And in weighing up the moralities, we rather go in for dishonest comparisons; after all, you can't compare the ideals of one side with the methods of the other, can you, now?'

Leamas was lost. He'd heard the man talked a lot of drivel before getting the knife in, but he'd never heard anything like this before.

'I mean, you've got to compare method with method, and ideal with ideal. I would say that since the war, our methods – ours and those of the opposition – have become much the same. I mean, you can't be less ruthless than the opposition simply because your government's *policy* is benevolent, can you now?' He laughed quietly to himself. 'That would *never* do,' he said.

For God's sake, thought Leamas, it's like working for a bloody clergyman. What is he up to?

‘That is why,’ Control continued, ‘I think we ought to try and get rid of Mundt . . . Oh really,’ he said, turning irritably towards the door, ‘where is that damned coffee?’

Control crossed to the door, opened it and talked to some unseen girl in the outer room. As he returned he said: ‘I really think we *ought* to get rid of him if we can manage it.’

‘Why? We’ve got nothing left in East Germany, nothing at all. You just said so – Riembeck was the last. We’ve nothing left to protect.’

Control sat down and looked at his hands for a while.

‘That is not altogether true,’ he said finally; ‘but I don’t think I need to bore you with the details.’

Leamas shrugged.

‘Tell me,’ Control continued, ‘are you tired of spying? Forgive me if I repeat the question. I mean, that is a phenomenon we understand here, you know. Like aircraft designers . . . metal fatigue, I think the term is. Do say if you are.’

Leamas remembered the flight home that morning and wondered.

‘If you were,’ Control added, ‘we would have to find some other way of taking care of Mundt. What I have in mind is a little out of the ordinary.’

The girl came in with the coffee. She put the tray on the desk and poured out two cups. Control waited till she had left the room.

‘Such a *silly* girl,’ he said, almost to himself. ‘It seems extraordinary they can’t find good ones any more. I do wish Ginnie wouldn’t go on holiday at times like this.’ He stirred his coffee disconsolately for a while.

‘We really must discredit Mundt,’ he said. ‘Tell me, do you drink a lot? Whisky and that kind of thing?’

Leamas had thought he was used to Control.

John le Carré

'I drink a bit. More than most I suppose.'

Control nodded understandingly. 'What do you know about Mundt?'

'He's a killer. He was here a year or two back with the East German Steel Mission. We had an Adviser here then: Maston.'

'Quite so.'

'Mundt was running an agent, the wife of an FO man. He killed her.'

'He tried to kill George Smiley. And of course he shot the woman's husband. He is a very distasteful man. Ex Hitler Youth and all that kind of thing. Not at all the intellectual kind of Communist. A practitioner of the cold war.'

'Like us,' Leamas observed drily. Control didn't smile.

'George Smiley knew the case well. He isn't with us any more, but I think you ought to ferret him out. He's doing things on seventeenth-century Germany. He lives in Chelsea, just behind Sloane Square. Bywater Street, do you know it?'

'Yes.'

'And Guillam was on the case as well. He's in Satellites Four, on the first floor. I'm afraid everything's changed since your day.'

'Yes.'

'Spend a day or two with them. They know what I have in mind. Then I wondered if you'd care to stay with me for the weekend. My wife,' he added hastily, 'is looking after her mother, I'm afraid. It will be just you and I.'

'Thanks. I'd like to.'

'We can talk about things in comfort then. It would be very nice. I think you might make a lot of money out of it. You can have whatever you make.'

'Thanks.'

The Spy Who Came in from the Cold

'That is, of course, if you're *sure you want to* . . . no metal fatigue or anything?'

'If it's a question of killing Mundt, I'm game.'

'Do you really feel that?' Control enquired politely. And then, having looked at Leamas thoughtfully for a moment, he observed: 'Yes, I really think you do. But you mustn't feel you *have* to say it. I mean, in our world we pass so quickly out of the register of hate or love – like certain sounds a dog can't hear. All that's left in the end is a kind of nausea; you never want to cause suffering again. Forgive me, but isn't that rather what you felt when Karl Riemeck was shot? Not hate for Mundt, nor love for Karl, but a sickening jolt like a blow on a numb body . . . They tell me you walked all night – just walked through the streets of Berlin. Is that right?'

'It's right that I went for a walk.'

'All night?'

'Yes.'

'What happened to Elvira?'

'God knows . . . I'd like to take a swing at Mundt,' he said.

'Good . . . good. Incidentally, if you should meet any old friends in the meantime, I don't think there's any point in discussing this with them. In fact,' Control added after a moment, 'I should be rather short with them. Let them think we've treated you badly. It's as well to begin as one intends to continue, isn't it?'

Decline

It surprised no one very much when they put Leamas on the shelf. In the main, they said, Berlin had been a failure for years, and someone had to take the rap. Besides, he was old for operational work, where your reflexes often had to be as quick as those of a professional tennis player. Leamas had done good work in the war, everyone knew that. In Norway and Holland he had somehow remained demonstrably alive, and at the end of it they gave him a medal and let him go. Later, of course, they got him to come back. It was bad luck about his pension, decidedly bad luck. Accounts Section had let it out, in the person of Elsie. Elsie said in the canteen that poor Alec Leamas would only have four hundred pounds a year to live on because of his interrupted service. Elsie felt it was a rule they really ought to change; after all, Mr Leamas had *done* the service, hadn't he? But there they were with Treasury on their backs, not a bit like the old days, and what could they do? Even in the bad days of Maston they'd managed things better.

Leamas, the new men were told, was the old school; blood, guts and cricket and School Cert. French. In Leamas' case this happened to be unfair, since he was bilingual in German and English and his Dutch was admirable; he also disliked cricket. But it was true that he had no degree.