

Hitler's Mind

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HITLER'S MIND

A Plunge into Madness

EDLEFF H. SCHWAAB

Foreword by Peter H. Wolff

PRAEGER

New York
Westport, Connecticut
London

ingful goal somehow, though that goal was still vague in my mind. More than anything else, I meant to find a sense of purpose. To do that, I chose the United States.

I studied to be a psychologist and settled in Boston. During these years of learning and working, I was convinced I had succeeded in detaching myself from the haunting memories of a childhood filled with brown uniforms, the sound of marching bands, and the eerie spectacle of torch parades, the chorused "Sieg Heils" of the masses, and a throaty, commanding voice shouting out of a horn mounted on a large square box with all kinds of knobs and dials, crystals and toggle switches. This new device, called a radio, fascinated people, and I was proud of my father for moving with the times and having bought such a battery-operated innovation. In all probability it was 1932, when I was ten years old. I remember listening to this ~~strange, thundering voice coming from the loudspeaker, and I clearly remember the frequent interruptions by ear-piercing static, though I cannot~~ remember a single word of the speech. My father's reaction left a deep impression when he made a somber admonition: "Remember this voice, my son, it is Adolf Hitler. One day he will be the most powerful man in our country."

After disembarking at a pier in New York harbor, welcomed by the Statue of Liberty, I was certain I had left behind the memory of these experiences. Or had I?

During my studies in New York, I met many Jews, some still tormented by vivid, nightmarish memories of having barely escaped the Nazis. I listened to traumatized people who had hovered on the edge of life before getting out of Germany, people still in the grip of a foreboding, lingering sense of impending doom, as if the nightmares of Nazi Germany could become reality once more. I listened but kept silent about my own background, feeling shame and guilt over having lived in a nation among people who were part of these horrendous crimes. I dreaded being ostracized by my new fellow Americans, and so whenever asked about how I had managed to get away, I did not answer, even though my silence implied innocently that I had been one of the fortunate ones to get out in the nick of time.

This feeling of shame was not new. At the end of the war back in Germany when looking at photos in newspapers and magazines, I had been plunged into realms that transcended all reason and sanity. I remember staring at mountains of human skeletons and cadavers being bulldozed into huge mass graves by masked drivers. The stench of death reeked from these pictures. I looked with numb feelings at photos of surviving victims of Nazi atrocities, reduced to skin and bones from malnutrition, with penetrating glances staring accusingly into the camera, often with a vacant expression filled with doubts, wondering whether or not they were alive after all.

Only gradually did I learn then about what had really been happening in

looked noticeably more sophisticated than any one of us. We had anticipated hearing about the world being stunned by the German victory after a six-week battle in France, where our fathers had fought so steadfastly in the trenches for four long years, from 1914 to 1918. Instead, he told us the startling news broadcast over a Zurich radio station that Germans were deporting Jews to concentration camps in Poland. They were herded together and shot, murdered outright.

We looked at each other and broke out in nervous, stilted giggles. How could Herbert have become a victim of brainwashing by enemy propaganda so quickly, we thought. We reminded him of what our history teacher had taught us in high school about the stories of World War I atrocities allegedly committed by German soldiers on their march through the Belgian countryside. They were said to have plundered and raped, shot old people, and hacked off the hands of children. We told Herbert that the world must really hate the Germans to cook up ugly stories about Jews being so grossly abused. We wanted to know if the world did not admire Germans for risking their lives to save the nations from communism? Killing Jews? Murder? That was a totally different story and outrightly inconceivable. Who knows what the enemy propaganda would say next about Germans? No wonder Josef Goebbels, the propaganda minister in Berlin, had his hands full defending the reputation of Hitler's Reich. Someone better be busy, we felt, to correct the slander and falsehoods spread about the noble enterprise of the German army.

After listening to Herbert, I felt uneasy. Did I really not know what was going on in my own country? I recalled what I had seen for years: Jews, the target of ridicule and scorn; Jews constantly blamed and accused; Jews not wanted, an alien people living among Germans. Was there perhaps a grain of truth in what Herbert told us?

The trouble was that I had no way of finding out, back in 1941. I could not even make up my own mind about the Jewish people. By the time Herbert had returned from Switzerland, they had already disappeared from Krefeld. Several thousand had been ordered to report to the railroad station to be transported east, somewhere in Poland, to be "resettled." What I knew was only what I had heard and read. They were supposed to have done horrible things to the Germans. Newspapers always had a gruesome tale to print, reporting crimes, corruption, exploitation, and the rape of German girls. One of my high school teachers talked a lot about Jews and reminded us to heed the message on the big billboards we saw on our way to school: "Jews Are Our Misfortune." The signs in the windows of small shops, "Jews Not Wanted" or "Aryan Store" or "No Jewish Customers," were gone by now. There was no more need for them; the Jews had disappeared.

The few Jewish people I had known before they were transported to an unknown destination did not strike me as being any different from any

Germans I knew. In our high school class we had two Jewish boys—David, small and thin, and Ezekiel, plump and big—but the only annoying thing about this incongruous pair was that they were among the best students in class. Whenever an argument among us deteriorated into a fight, they spoke Hebrew or Yiddish with each other. That made them different from us. One day, they were no longer in school. They had suddenly vanished, and no one seemed to know what had happened to them.

Another person who had disappeared from my life was Dr. Rudolph Wolff, our pediatrician. He had his office on the Ostwall, not far from where we lived. On his home visits he wore a black suit and carried a small, black leather case containing all the horrible tasting medicines he dispensed to us children with so much persuasive skill. He had a canny ability to make my sisters and me swallow teaspoons of his bitter remedies, which we were convinced would make us sicker than we were.

Dr. Wolff advised our parents to buy cod liver oil to strengthen our muscles and help our bodies grow. It tasted and smelled like . . . cod liver oil. We would line up every morning before school to take a spoonful. Our father rewarded us for our willing sacrifice with a ten-pfennig piece. The money was placed into a glass jar, visibly displayed on the kitchen counter. When the jar was full, our mother emptied it to buy another bottle of cod liver oil with it!

One day Dr. Wolff no longer came, and his office on the Ostwall was closed. When I asked my father what happened, he was evasive and became noticeably embarrassed. Bearing a worrisome expression he replied, "I do not know; he has moved away." After that, Dr. Wolff was not mentioned anymore.

Some thirty years later in the United States, by a strange and fateful coincidence, I learned what had happened to him and his family. I had completed my training as a psychologist and was working at the Judge Baker Guidance Center in Boston with a colleague, a research psychiatrist and psychoanalyst named Peter Wolff. While enjoying lunch with him one day, I discovered incidentally that I was sitting face to face with the son of our beloved pediatrician in Krefeld. Peter Wolff related the story of his family's incredible odyssey. After deciding to leave Germany in the mid-1930s, when emigration of Jews was still possible, and knowing that sooner or later oppression would lead to ruin, to internment, expulsion, or deportation—or worse—the Wolffs moved first to Holland, then to England, before coming to the United States to settle in Chicago where Dr. Wolff, Sr., started a new practice while his son attended medical school. I do not recall Peter telling me about having been badly treated, although not being physically abused was not very much to be thankful for.

The perspective of those who lived through the Nazi era will soon no longer be accessible to younger researchers, who will have to be guided by

their own emotional and moral judgment about the planned massacre of millions of innocent people. The distance I now experience enhances the possibility of my presenting detached views, tempered as they are by a newly won objectivity. Still, even an objective assessment of the Nazi years is painful for me. It is simply difficult to resist the temptation to let personal aversion grow into abject condemnation, particularly since my own father had been a "big" Nazi.

Hans Schwaab was a respected local wine merchant, selling both wholesale and retail, who had taken over the business from my grandfather. In the post-World War I era, wine became a luxury few people could afford, and my father's business suffered greatly. The depression years made matters worse and caused us hardship that was often quite severe. In spite of this disastrous development, there was a hidden blessing. During the long hours waiting for orders and customers, my father had time to write poetry, novels, and stage plays, which were published and produced. He joked about having become some kind of *Lokalgenie*, a man with some stroke of genius not recognized beyond the borders of his native town. But his success helped his business to flourish in unexpected ways. Father was euphoric, while mother looked on, taking care of us three children with as much love and warmth as any mother was capable of giving.

I entered my teens and spent most of my time in school and with friends. Soon, it seemed, I was spending more time with my friends than doing homework. I began to fail French. Somehow I made myself believe I kept my daily life under reasonable control, fighting off the blues about the troubles I had to face with my teachers. I nursed an optimistic mood by watching my fellow Germans be content and happy. Times had changed and supplied me with the illusion that all was well in Germany. Everyone I knew felt good about the turn of events; people had work and food, business was prospering, and building projects were underway everywhere I looked.

There was never a midnight knock at our door; no *Razzias* by storm troopers or policemen barging in. The explanation was very simple: My father was a "good German" and well connected in local party circles. He had been vocal about his belief in the Führer's good intentions and viewed the Nazi movement as a blessing for the country. Mesmerized by the promise of glorious times awaiting Germans, he used to say with infectious exuberance, "Europe's future belongs to Germans," watching my face to see if it would mirror his own enthusiasm.

My father had been a member of the Nazi party since 1930 and often regretted not having joined earlier. His patriotic spirit, with its intermittent creative outbursts, was grounded in the concept of love of and duty for the Fatherland. He admired the British as exemplary citizens, especially demonstrated in their conviction "My country, right or wrong!" He was full of sayings and anecdotes from British history and used them to point out how

the English people's sense of rectitude and devotion to their country should be an example to all Germans. No greatness would come to them otherwise. Unless Germans imitated the commitment of the English to conquer and protect their vast colonial empire through a sheer display of guts and daring, they should not aspire to be a world power.

Although father had been an active member of the party, he never pressured me to become part of the Hitler Youth Organization. It puzzled me at first, but I loved him for respecting my dislike for mindless marching exercises and the bullying of youthful leaders not much older than I was. He urged me to join, instead, a sports club and become an athlete. That I wanted to do very much and joined the Krefelder Sport Verein, soon becoming one of their field-and-track stars as a middle-distance runner. Father followed my exploits at weekend meets and boasted to his friends that I would eventually be on the German Olympic team. Such remarks filled me with dreams of glory but, in the end, did not help me to improve my school performance one bit.

I will never know whether my father was anti-Semitic. I did not think he was anti-anything, but I certainly knew he was pro-German, being vocal about his pride in the rapid growth of the Third Reich. He viewed nazism as a process of rejuvenation of the country through the rediscovery of the ancient roots of Germanic culture, which had been lost in the mists of medieval history. As a romantic and idealist he embraced the Nazi regime and kept writing his patriotic poems and plays. He also gave speeches on the wonders to be found in the resurrection of old Germanic traditions, often taking me along for his public appearances. He sat me down right in the front row of the lecture hall or next to himself in a special loge in the theater on opening nights of his stage plays.

Our house was always full of writers, publishers, actors, singers, and all kinds of theater folk who stomped through the rooms, vivacious, dramatic, and always exuberant. These social events made my teenage years exciting. I watched and listened and was fascinated and astonished by all I heard and saw. Still being quite shy, I did not make myself part of these occasions but stayed close to my mother. She seemed to keep to herself also, somewhat overwhelmed by the commotion caused by this motley group who frequented our house.

There were also other friends of Father's who visited regularly, men with whom Father had fought in the war, old buddies from the frontlines in France and Russia. Some lived nearby while others traveled to Krefeld from afar. On many weekends my father took the train to Wuppertal or Cologne or Essen to visit with their families. When they met in our home, the reunions inevitably became noisy celebrations of war experiences. Strong bonds had been built among them, and I listened to the shared memories of having survived when so many died facing the adversity of war. It was a brotherhood of men trading stories and recalling their memories while toasting

their old comrades killed fighting at their side. By paying tribute to their dead they honored their accomplishments and ultimate sacrifice, assuring them a permanent place in the community of old veterans.

I looked forward to these gatherings, wondering whether experiences of this nature were waiting for me, once I grew up. I eavesdropped to learn about the risk taking, the adventures, and the bravery of grown men and stared with admiration at their photos of the war, posing as they did in front of big cannons, next to army horses, and behind machine guns.

I heard them argue about the controversial, recently published war novel by Erich Maria Remarque, *All Quiet on the Western Front*. Most of them admired Remarque for really telling it as it was. The novel mirrored their own perceptions shaped by their *Fronterlebnis*, the frontline experience. Affected by the tragic brutality and violence of war and their constant encounter with death, they took pride in being called the Lost Generation. Yet others took issue with Remarque for failing to stress that the horrors of war could bring noble heroism and that the gruesome business of killing and surviving brings virtuous glory to men and pride in serving one's country. They felt Remarque had written an antiwar novel that demeaned the honor of the German frontline soldier dressed in his field-gray uniform. They supported their views by pointing to Hitler's decision to ban the book and remove it from all libraries and book stores. They chided Father for leaving it to Remarque to capture the life of a frontline soldier, when they could easily have pooled their experiences and had their Hans Schwaab do Remarque's novel one better. It was only then that I realized my father was known as a poet who had published short stories and poems in army newspapers during the war.

Another topic in these discussions was Hitler. They were proud of him and said he was one of them and understood the dignity of war. The true spirit of Hitler's message, they believed, was captured in Ernst Jünger's sensational war diary, *In Stahlgewittern* (In the Storm of Steel), published right after the war in 1920, a book glorifying death and treating it as part of the collective character-building experiences of meeting the enemy in frontline action. These veterans struggled to make sense out of violence, and Jünger gave them a perfect argument to sharpen their conviction that the destructiveness of war can bring inner strength and facilitate human liberation.

Listening to such thoughts, I felt scared not knowing whether I would have to go through similar experiences to become a "real man." I experienced my own struggle with confusion caused by thoughts not fully digested by my teenage mind.

In retrospect, I see the devastating effect war had on the emotional lives of my father's friends. Their experiences of the Great War had generated an alienated outlook on civilization and humanity, ultimately giving rise to bitterness and frustration over the meaning of life itself. No wonder these

men had great difficulty rejoining civilian life. Some of them still wore their old army jackets without rank insignia but with decorations. One walked on crutches because of an amputated leg. Another had only one arm. I was horrified, yet at the same time fascinated, by their endless stories. In all this I found myself admiring my father for having been decorated and promoted for having shown "bravery before the enemy."

I was left with a clear message: War is an essential part of existence. Somehow, I knew I would some day have to fight my own war, the way my father had to stand up and be counted in the Great War and the way my grandfather had in the Franco-Prussian War of 1870-71. He had been in the victorious battle of Sedan, charging the French lines on horseback, saber drawn, screaming "Hurrah" at the top of his lungs. He did not speak often about his day of glory, but he quietly observed the national holiday, Sedan Day, on September 1, when he allowed me to look at his saber, too heavy for me to lift, resting in a trunk in the attic.

My family lived on the left bank of the Rhine River. We children were raised to believe that the French were our enemy, the archenemy of all Germans. I was taught how the Frenchmen wanted to make the Rhine River the eastern border of France, as it had been in the days of Napoleon. There were many moments when I was frightened by the prospect of having to live under French rule, especially since I had failed French in school quite regularly. I heartily joined the singing of the national song "Die Wacht am Rhein" (Watch on the Rhine River) whenever it was sung on patriotic occasions. And there were many of them. I sang loudly as if my voice could contribute to the prevention of a potential national tragedy.

In 1938, less than a year before Hitler's Wehrmacht invaded Poland, my father had received a most impressive looking letter from Berlin. The Propaganda Ministry offered him a government appointment as a lecturer on Nazi philosophy and asked him to organize six-week training programs for civil servants under the impressive-sounding title of "Reichsstellenleiter," some sort of commissioner. He settled all his business affairs, closed down his store, and happily moved to the capital of the Reich, teeming with the spirit of national socialism. The government appointment was the fulfillment of my father's longing to contribute concretely to the process of the Nazi party. In spirit he always had been in Berlin, to him the heart of the Nazi movement. For my mother and my two sisters, Grita and Anneliese, and myself, the change was momentous, for it drastically altered our family life. We felt left behind to cope with a void created by Father's absence. At no other time had I become so keenly aware of the extent to which he had exerted a dynamic, energetic, and forceful influence on all of us.

Preoccupied by his new assignment, he found no time to write any letters, just a perfunctory postcard now and then. We felt deserted, aban-

done in fact, yet we carried on the best we could leading our routine lives with schoolwork for us children and household chores for Mother. One day I decided to send him an angry letter to let him know how we felt about his departure, but I also told him how much we missed him. He replied immediately, inviting me to visit him during the upcoming spring vacation to see for myself what the Third Reich was all about and learn why he felt he had no choice but to join other devoted men in the government in Berlin.

During spring vacation in 1939, when I was sixteen years old, I was eager to travel. These were stormy days. The dissolution of the Czechoslovak state had caused great international turmoil, but I thought I lived in exciting times: Germany was on the march. Czechoslovakia, so Hitler had told the German people on March 16, 1939, was but an artificial state composed of two ancient German provinces, Bohemia and Moravia, which were finally reunited with the Reich. Austria had already joined the Fatherland barely a year earlier, fulfilling what Hitler envisioned as a natural progression in his historical dream to forge a Greater Germany.

As soon as my vacation started, I boarded the train, proud of being a part of great events in history. Apart from the excitement of seeing my father again, I was anxious to see the wonders of the capital with its fantastic building projects: the Olympic stadium complex, the new autobahns, and the brand new chancellery. I wanted to see them all, especially the Olympic stadium. My times in the 800-meter race had already broken records in my age group. In a few days I would be walking around the huge complex, staring at the oval track, and wondering if I would ever be good enough to run there, representing my country in an international meet. It was on that very track that Jesse Owens had won four gold medals at the Olympic Games for the United States just three years before. In my mind I relived the spectacular duel between Owens and the German champion in the broad jump, Lutz Long, who set a new Olympic record, only to be outjumped by Owens on his last try. After the ceremony these two athletic heroes walked arm in arm around the stadium to acknowledge the accolades of the crowd. In that special moment in history, the Olympic spirit transcended Hitler's intentions to use the Berlin games to impress the world with the physical prowess of the Aryan race. Superiority was meant to be an outward manifestation of the truth of his ideology, but it was no more than a denial of the universal human effort to celebrate what binds all human beings into a brotherhood with its hopes for a better future for all people.

After I arrived in Berlin and saw my father again, I found him looking different from the days I had known him in Krefeld. His manners were strained and lofty. His enthusiasm had given way to a grim and worried outlook. He still spoke of the greatness that was Germany and of a new emerging human being, but he did so as if he had to persuade himself that this was all so. Father complained about the lethargy of Germans. Too

coming from Berlin. When the court martial convened, the proceedings were brief. My father was found guilty of undermining the morale of the officer corps and was sentenced to death by firing squad. In the displacement caused by the rapidly advancing Allied army, forcing frequent relocation of the prison population, no one seemed to be in charge of arranging the execution. During one of these moves, the prison guards panicked and deserted upon hearing rumors that British soldiers were just a few miles away. The rumors happened to be true. A British squad captured the prison convoy and liberated all men in prison garb.

After the Second World War had finally taken its course, my father reunited with Agnes in West Germany, and after securing a divorce from his mother, he married her. They had one son, Hans-Hartmut, who is now grown and practices medicine in Westphalia.

I left for the United States, and after I was established in my adopted country, I had Grita and Anneliese join me. Grita came with her husband and their two sons. Anneliese's husband had died at the end of the war from his serious war injuries. She came alone, bringing her two children. Once we had settled, our mother came to join us in the New World. She lived with us for many years, though too old to learn a new language. She made the adjustment all the same. Nothing else could have made her adjustment easier than being reunited with her children. She is now buried in the same country she adopted. We all had come here to build a new life. In the American tradition of liberty and justice, we were all given a chance to do just that.

During my many years in the United States, I avoided thinking about my experiences of growing up in Nazi Germany. They belonged to another phase of my life, one that had not enabled me to acquire any perspective on my future. In those Nazi years, when I passed from childhood to adolescence, my happy family life was beclouded by perverse political messages given to us young people by a society that had lost the bounds between what is normal and what is abnormal. With its warped social and political practices, Nazi Germany provided me, as it did for all German youth, with a bewildering array of atypical and contradictory guidelines which to grow up.

I found little meaning in a social climate filled with noisy propagandistic educational influence, and constant appeals to be a "good German man," to do one's duty for the nation and not ask what the nation was giving in return. Hitler's message pounded us daily: "Gemeinnutz geht vor Eigennutz," meaning, loosely, that the welfare of the nation transcends the welfare of the individual. Similar slogans bombarded us constantly, every citizen was expected to identify with grandiose visions. It was not impossible for any growing person to find the psychological bearings necessary to become an adult. There was no definition of individuality,

The Secrets of His Inner World

There is no disagreement about the fact that Hitler ushered in an era of a radical, dictatorial regime that eventually engulfed the whole world in a wave of destruction. However, there is hardly any agreement about what motivated him to embark on his ill-fated and monstrous career. These disagreements are bothersome. Virtually no avenue of inquiry has been left unexplored, and these efforts have resulted in the bringing forth of a wide array of conflicting viewpoints. The search for Hitler is obviously as complex as it is elusive.

Hitler was an emotionally distant and contradictory person who anxiously protected his private thoughts, even though he cast himself into the role of an honest broker and created the image of a deeply feeling and open human being. His persuasiveness was startling and succeeded in kindling deep admiration among his followers, while he remained extremely guarded in all personal matters.

His inaccessibility has kept researchers curious about the nature of his inner world. He left no notes, wrote no personal letters, kept no diary, and made it virtually impossible for anyone to know him. Even his chief architect and later armament minister, Albert Speer, could not claim to have known him intimately. Speer looked back after the nightmare of nazism was over and remarked at the Nuremberg Trial, when his turn came to speak up, "If Hitler had had any friend I could certainly have been one of his closest friends."¹ With a mixture of puzzlement and frustration he admitted in his memoirs, "Never in my life had I met a person who so seldom revealed his feelings, and if he did, instantly locked them away."² Speer was perplexed because he had "spent endless times with him, was always at home in his inner circle, and was moreover his foremost associate

* D.T. How important to
leave no record

in his favorite field, architecture."³ These feelings were not just Speer's own. In a discussion in 1941 with Rudolf Hess, Hitler's deputy and designated successor, the two men agreed that "there had been moments when we felt we had come close to him. But we were all inevitably disillusioned. If either one of us ventured a slightly personal tone, Hitler promptly put up an unbreakable wall."⁴

Another man close to Hitler and in a position to know him intimately was the chief of the operation staff of the Wehrmacht High Command, Alfred Jodl, who was at Hitler's side daily for many years. Loyal to Hitler even in death—out of unquestioned acceptance of the principle of absolute obedience rather than admiration or respect—he said while waiting to be sentenced at the Nuremberg Trial in 1945:

Do I then know this man at all, at whose side I have led for many years so thorny and self-denying an existence? Did he not play with my idealism, too, and only used it for purposes that he concealed in his innermost being? Who can boast knowing another human being, when that person had not opened up to him the most hidden corners of his mind? Thus, I do not even know today what *he* thought, knew, and wanted to do, but rather what I thought and suspected about it.⁵

Since no one succeeded in penetrating Hitler's inner world, there is no choice but to make inferences based on selective observations. To scrutinize Hitler's words is the only avenue to discovering the hidden messages revealing the dictator's true intentions. The examination of the content of his thoughts by perusing his speeches and books will enable us to identify his patterns of logic and reasoning, his process of conceptualizing and justifying ideas, and the scope of his grandiose visions. But it is frustrating to recognize that a psychological interpretation is handicapped by the absence of any window to his soul. He astonished the world with the ease with which he displayed emotions in his speeches, in his monologues, and in his style of making pronouncements or uttering threats, but he gave no clues to his personal motivation.

Turning to his book, *Mein Kampf*, in the hope of discovering a well of revelations will lead to disappointment. The far-reaching outlines of his future plans announced to the world with so much candor was, after all, only an outline. This blueprint of all he meant to do in the future was presented with an abundance of feelings: sensational condemnation, vulgar trivialities, and authoritative assertions of what to him were universally valid truths, endless tirades against the so-called enemies of Germany, dangerous bigotry expressed in radical racism, and rhetorically dressed-up platitudes presented as sophisticated political thoughts. But Hitler said all this without baring definable, private strategies on how to deploy his power—should he obtain it. He did not reveal his secrets because of his dread of being figured out and losing his charisma.

* Back to Guitl

"fed into her anxious pampering, so that Adolf drank in the maternal trauma with his mother's milk. He was given, and he took, the breast long and lustily enough to be fixated on it at the stage of oral aggression."⁶ Binion is convinced the impact of the stresses on Klara had been unbearable and colored the entire relationship with her son, causing a symbiotic tie that Hitler was never able to overcome. Thus his emotional growth was stunted.

Binion further claimed that the bond between mother and infant was essentially incestuous in nature. Under the guise of fulfilling her motherly duty, she indulged in her closeness to her son by excluding her husband from her life. She allegedly deserted him physically and emotionally while embracing her infant lovingly. What mattered to Binion was Klara's narcissistic preoccupation with "using and abusing Adolf for her traumatic relieving,"⁷ in the process creating the serious flaws in Hitler's personality development.

The sickness in Hitler's mind, visible in his rabid anti-Semitism, Binion linked to his mother's fatal illness, for which she was treated by Dr. Eduard Bloch, who happened to be Jewish. After Dr. Bloch had diagnosed Hitler's mother's disease, he saw no other choice but to recommend surgical removal of her left breast. To Hitler this was allegedly an unforgivable and cruel act deserving of equally cruel retaliation. Hitler blamed Dr. Bloch for the insidious amputation of his mother's "guilty breast,"⁸ which had nursed him in such an incestuous manner during his infancy. "His mother's late illness looms behind his later powerful diatribes against the Jewish cancer, the Jewish poison, the Jewish profiteers,"⁹ Binion was convinced. Hitler then generalized this intense hatred from the Jewish Dr. Bloch to all Jews. The poisoning through the application of iodoform bandages to the open surgical wounds was said to have generated Hitler's inner rage against Dr. Bloch and became the origin of his fierce desire to destroy all Jews. "Abusing 'the Jew' was for Hitler a means of abusing Bloch,"¹⁰ concluded Binion.

It will remain a matter of conjecture to assert that Hitler's entire personality makeup can be reduced to the effects of a disturbed attachment to his mother with the ensuing need to avenge her death while under the care of a Jewish physician. Perhaps the mysteries of the roots of Hitler's sadistic personality can be penetrated only through such daring hypothesizing. Rob Waite, like Binion, was similarly not hesitant to do just that. Intrigued by the opportunities offered by psychoanalytic theory, Waite evokes the Oedipus theory in all its literal meaning as a pivotal, character-forming experience in the early life of young Adolf.

According to Sigmund Freud, the Oedipal conflict results from a struggle of an utmost private nature—the sexual attachment of a little boy to his mother. What really matters in normal development is the challenge for the boy to separate gradually from the primary source of support, nurturance and love. In this struggle of a boy to possess his mother as the provider of his needs, the father becomes an annoying and potentially dangerous rival.

* Check on the odor of iodoform

"psychopathic case."³ Even the ardent nationalist, General Erich von Ludendorff, militarist, power minded, and a close supporter of Hitler until the Putsch in 1923, perceived Hitler as dictatorial, menacing, and dangerous to peace. On the eve of Hitler's appointment as chancellor of the Weimar Republic at the end of January 1933, Ludendorff sent an alarming message to Paul von Hindenburg to warn him in the most dramatic style: "I prophesy solemnly that this unholy being [meaning Hitler] will push our country across the abyss and will bring our nation unimaginable tragedy."⁴

The warnings were not always coming from disaffected German patriots, like Rauschning and Ludendorff. Foreign observers familiar with the German scene were frightened as well. As a visiting scholar to Nazi Germany returning to the United States, Frederick Schuman concluded as early as 1933: "The Third Reich moves inexorably toward ends predetermined by the dynamics of Fascism. . . . The suicidal and homicidal tensions of collective paranoia and megalomania have driven the dictatorship towards ever greater intolerance at home and ever accelerating preparation for war abroad."⁵ The Australian historian Stephen Roberts made his observations two years before he knew Hitler would embark on his trail of destructiveness and expressed his grave concerns over "Hitler's persecution mania, his way of escaping from reality, his great anxieties, his alternating moods of melancholia and elation, his recurring doubts of himself and constant sense of omnipotence."⁶ And the English scholar A. J. P. Taylor informed the world that many of his influential British countrymen, including Winston Churchill, had believed "Germany was in the grip of a madman."⁷ The clinical judgments rendered by these historians should not offend; after all, professional historians tend to be quite perceptive in their roles as lay psychologists.

These foreboding messages by voices from many quarters either were not frequent or loud enough to penetrate, or they did not frighten the world sufficiently to muster resolve in showing active opposition to Hitler's expansionism. The governments of Western nations chose instead to trust their judgment that a containment of Hitler through appeasement was still possible. It can never be said, though, the world did not know about a looming danger. Scholars were only one source of warnings. A flood of powerful publications by writers and journalists placated Hitler and his nazism, without triggering any political action. The titles of their works speak volumes: *Can Europe Keep the Peace?* (1931), *Germany Puts the Clock Back* (1933), *Hitler over Europe* (1934), *Germany Prepares for War* (1934), and *The Shadow of the Swastika* (1938).⁸ The alarm was certainly sounded, but nothing seemed to work to turn the tide to stop Hitler. The world did not listen, nor did nations understand the serious psychiatric implications of Hitler's ideas, largely because psychiatry was still in its infancy.

Complacency may have come from the perception that the world happens to be full of disturbed people who are not threatening to anyone. Such

The Person and the Image

Following a thought-provoking conversation with Cardinal Michael von Faulhaber, the head of the German Protestant church, at Hitler's Obersalzberg retreat in November 1936, long before Hitler had reached the climax of his far-reaching plan of conquest and mass destruction, Hitler expressed an ominous thought to his architect, Albert Speer: "There are two possibilities for me: to win through with all my plans or to fail. If I win, I shall be one of the greatest men in history. If I fail, I shall be condemned, despised and damned."¹

He was unaware that the latter would prove to be his fate. Nor could anyone else have forecast with accuracy the outcome of his career at the time Hitler projected his own future. If the German people had been able to see him as a man deserving condemnation and damnation, they probably would have turned against him. But Hitler had made sure that this would not happen, presenting himself as a leader with visions of a wonderful future for the German people while carefully concealing his underlying boundless ambitions. He needed a public image to accomplish such an objective.

Hitler's servile personal photographer, Heinrich Hoffmann, who claimed in his gossipy, trite, and superficial account of his relationship with Hitler to have been his closest friend, and Josef Goebbels, the minister of propaganda, were assigned to achieve this task by controlling the media. Nothing was permitted to appear in public to cast any negative light on the Führer. Such coverage provided assurance that no picture, no stories, no editorial, ever surfaced with any critical or negative connotations about him as a person or his activities. Hoffmann's pictures of Hitler portrayed the German leader in newspapers, magazines, and posters in the stance of a determined

the crippled veterans of the Great War, always proclaiming his affection for them all. He stretched out his arms reaching for the heart of the masses. At the annual giant party rally on November 13, 1937, in Nuremberg, he exclaimed, mixing arrogance and gratitude: "This is the miracle of our times: that you have found me, that you have found me among so many millions. And I have found you. That is Germany's fortune."⁷

Who would suspect insanity behind the mask of a confident politician able to organize a powerful party and command discipline among countless idealists, opportunists, and fellow travelers? Who would speculate about the lack of soundness of his ideas or accuse Hitler of being a madman when he did not blatantly do anything mad? The core of Hitler's mental disturbance lay hidden behind this facade of a passionate and competent leader. Yet the pathological nature of his personality can become visible if one looks at the content of his thoughts and the extent to which he failed to anchor his ideas in reality. He carried on by confounding dream imagery and reality as if his will power, visions, and self-image mattered more than any other force in the world.

D.T. - I was his source. But
his ideas came from
my powerful source. Always

The Nature of His Intelligence

Hitler spoke at huge beer hall rallies with chilling effectiveness, and in all personal contacts he controlled conversations with commanding rigor. None of his followers thought of him, in terms of modern concepts in the field of psychiatry, as a disturbed individual obsessed with paranoid notions. To the contrary, most Germans saw in him a genius with a brilliant grasp of global issues and a clairvoyant vision of what the future would hold for them. Somehow Hitler saw to it that he gained such a reputation. Behind the image and the gift of tirades lay his mesmerizing oratory, his iron will, and, above all, his missionary zeal.

A glance at these qualities provides us with a partial answer to questions about how his mental abilities enabled him to cause his collaborators and the masses of the people to perceive him as an extraordinary individual. An analysis of his mode of thinking and reasoning, as well as of the complexities and adaptability of the content of his thoughts, should help us gain a better understanding of the nature of the workings of his mind.

In the absence of any formal education or any display of exceptional artistic talent and of any outstanding intellectual accomplishments, nothing served Hitler better than his extraordinary memory in creating the illusion of his being some kind of genius. He did not tell us how he acquired his vast fund of factual information, except for saying he read a lot. But everyone who knew him was impressed by the skill with which he utilized his knowledge. He was able to retain and readily recall an unusually wide range of facts, certainly more than any ordinary mortal would care to remember.

His retentive memory often obscured the trivial nature of what he had rendered to memory. For instance, thirty years later he still recalled the make and serial number of a bicycle he rode during the First World War in

*D.T. - I was his source. But
than I was connected to a
more powerful source. Memory*

1915,¹ and he astonished his listeners with his command of an incredible amount of technical detail of military weaponry, such as data on every major vessel in the German and British navies—their power plants, armor plating, and gun displacements, for example. When the chief of staff, Wilhelm Keitel, cited ammunition expenditures during the French campaign in the summer of 1940, Hitler countered by comparing these figures with the consumption of 210 mm and 150 mm ammunition during the year 1916, and doing so by quoting monthly figures.²

One of his faithful secretaries was so flabbergasted, she reported after the war, that "I often asked myself how one human being could preserve so many facts."³ His entire staff complained about being browbeaten and felt "discouraged by the feeling that, since the Führer had already thought of everything himself, there was little they could contribute by way of suggestions or initiatives," so David Irving tells us.⁴

By employing his peculiar practice of making people feel inferior, Hitler deliberately surrounded himself with the illusion that he was all-knowing. The eloquence of his informed arguments was simply intimidating and fostered the image of an exceptional mind at work. If his gift to attain astonishing technical details of weapons systems and design of armament of any kind used by German and foreign armies is judged to be a critical dimension of superior intelligence, Hitler must be said to have been a brilliant man. Similarly, if the ability to organize and control a well-functioning political system and initiate the building of the biggest war machine in Europe within an incredibly short time span and if the grasp of military matters and strategic imagination displayed during the years prior to his disastrous Russian campaign are any indications of unusual mental powers, Hitler again can be said to have stood head and shoulders above anyone in the circle of leaders of the Third Reich. Are these observations sufficient to call him a brilliant person?

To begin with, the origin of Hitler's apparently highly superior intelligence will always remain somewhat of a mystery. No family member on either side had left any record to claim noteworthy accomplishment. His father was certainly an intelligent man but not exceptional, and his mother was bright but simple and uneducated. It should be puzzling indeed to see them produce such an unusual son, who could have handled outstanding academic challenges had he so chosen. In spite of many early signs of being very gifted, he resisted all urging to seek a higher education. He simply fought any pressure by his family to commit himself to traditional academic training. His father tried in vain to have him enter the educational mainstream and become traditionally motivated and ambitious. To no avail. Hitler certainly became motivated and ambitious but also violently anti-intellectual. With this set of negative attitudes toward intellectual matters, the question is compelling: How could he get as far as he did in his career? He must have possessed exceptional abilities, somehow.

*as seen in the picture of
the Maestro. Each memory always
used to verify arguments. Each
memory offered endless possibilities.*

we could lead our clients by the nose.

literature and philosophy and Hitler's particular use of his intellectual ass can be found. His style of expressing ideas simply did not rise above t level of pseudophilosophical brainstorming.

On the battlefield of trading wits with political and militarily aspirin people, he always held his own with his persuasive oratory and inventi action; yet the content of his thought was void of deepened insights th have a basis in rational and contemplative thinking. What drove Hitler in his paranoid frame of mind were the same forces that motivate truly int lectual people to be creative and accomplished, except that Hitler's exce tional capabilities can readily be related to his psychopathology.

The freely rising images in his mind were linked closely to his denial the claims of reality. They were like overdetermined fantasies found in tl inner world of daydreaming and the creative play characteristically observ in childhood. Unfortunately for history, he elevated these free-floating fas tasies to take on the form of a thought system he expected to be take most seriously. When he began to couple this system with the well-ratio alized use of power to do harm to other human beings, he crossed th threshold into the domain of mental disturbances. The level of matu functioning provided by balancing emotions and thoughts to serve as a coi tinuation of and substitute for a child's fantasy life and adolescent drea was never reached.

It is nearly impossible to detect anything in his writings or speeches t show that he was capable of transcending the powerful machinations of a overactive youthful mind and to function on an exceptional level of abstra tion. His mind did not operate by using concepts as a product of reasonin that, once developed, could play a critical role in the formation of plan that weigh a future outcome.

The concepts underlying his *Weltanschauung* were a condensation of wh he saw, read, or heard in his youth. He brought these experiences togeth in an effort to find the key to unlock the secrets of universal knowledge and tried to sort out what was wrong with the world and how he could fin remedies to make improvements. And whatever he saw, read, or heard le him to become convinced that the key to all problems of civilization lay i the mortal dangers posed to humankind by Jewish evilness. He alway evaluated his experiences from the standpoint of his pathological prejudice to find reasons to confirm and reinforce his preconceptions of Jews. In doin so, he departed from the process of conceptualizing and generalizing s basic to all logic and scientific thinking.

1919 { In not acquiring the necessary grasp of the need for an orderly relation ship between the facts in his mind and the demands of reality to engage i abstract and flexible thinking, Hitler was left with his craving to be a think of extraordinary dimensions. This longing had always been visible durin his teenage and young adult years when he was determined to do some thing spectacular—to be a famous artist, the best architect in Germany, th

producer of an opera, or the designer of gigantic urban renewal projects. When he was about thirty years of age and still totally unknown, he intended to be a renowned writer-philosopher.

Hitler meant to write a book and set out to scribble down two pages of an outline of a manuscript entitled *The Germanic Revolution, Volume I*, complete with a cover design of a huge swastika appearing in the image of a rising sun.⁹ In his cryptic, handwritten notes, Hitler revealed his particular intellectual preoccupation with the roles Jews had played in the course of Western civilization. Though disorganized and muddled in content—generating frustration in any attempt to analyze them—Hitler expressed at this early point in his career what was to become a historic reality fifteen years later.

In all probability Hitler produced these notes in 1919 when he was still a political nonentity and still uncertain of what would become of him.¹⁰ The most striking aspect of these thought fragments is Hitler's attempt to anchor his thinking in one way or another in the Bible, to which he referred as the "Monumental History of Mankind."¹¹ In this account he viewed the Bible as "the first history of any people [based on] race laws" and conveyed the impression that he had searched the Bible to find its ultimate message hidden as it was in the story of ancient people in the "eternal flow of history." He became convinced that he had found it in the axiom "Racial purity the highest law." This discovery shaped his belief in a deeper-lying, unalterable process of nature governing all human conduct. The assertion that people had freedom and the power to subjugate nature was dismissed as arrogant.

"Nature is unbending," he wrote, "which means: victory of the stronger whose power or will gives him a greater claim to victory," seeing in "power the basis of all [laws of] nature." He followed with an obvious, though oblique, self-reference: "The man of genius in tune with nature does not try to test this assumption . . . and always acts in accordance with these laws." Hitler spoke of the "privilege of power" and clearly indicated that the notion of might makes right was to him a most fundamental principle determining all events in history. It also determined his own actions.

The message discovered in the Bible had direct relevance to his thinking about Jews. He occupied himself with the question of how Jews have managed to be successful in surviving the tragic adversity of their painful history. He asked, "All the nations of the Bible—cultures of Asia Minor, Mesopotamia, Palestine, Egypt—have been destroyed by it, i.e., by race. One nation has escaped: The Jews. Why?" He answered his own question by referring to the Bible. It had taught him that "not war destroys races—only original sin." This startling reference to the biblical story of the expulsion from Paradise assumes a bizarre meaning when he defined original sin as being an example of "blood poisoning." He reasoned that there is but one way to reverse the eviction from Paradise—by preserving "racial purity."

He seemed to agonize when arguing, "All nations have their own states—except for Jews. This means: the other nations—Aryans—had their own 'states' and could not save themselves. The Jew had no state of his own and saved himself nevertheless. It seems incomprehensible at first only—why?" Hitler then abruptly stopped his notes on his "Monumental History," seeing no need to provide an answer. He had already done so when demanding the recognition of racial purity as "the highest law" governing all human life. He closed with the factual statement of his dichotomous views of humankind: There are only "two races, Aryans and Jews."

A quiet admiration of Jews speaks from these remarks. It is possible to detect a sense of grudging envy behind his remarks about the reasons for the survival of Jews in history, unprotected as they had been by any state organization since the Diaspora. Here was a lesson to be learned for Germans. Should they not adhere also to the dictates of nature to protect their future? Hitler had become certain that he had discovered a "racial theory," and he promulgated "racial purity" as a canonical principle to assure a glorious future for all Aryans, arguing in *Mein Kampf* that "Jews had succeeded in preserving their racial purity better than any other nation in the world."¹² Germans must learn to secure their long-range historical existence in the same vein. The infamous Nuremberg Laws issued in 1935 can be interpreted as an indirect attempt by Hitler to emulate Jews by making "racial purity" an edict of national socialism.

The concept of Jews serving as a model for Germans was intolerable to Hitler, nonetheless. The religiously anchored reference to Jews as the "Chosen People" of God irked Hitler beyond reason. To him it was an outright claim of superiority over other people. He felt driven to correct history itself by planning the destruction of Jews to establish an unchallenged superiority of Aryans instead. His entire obsession with "racial purity" remained a virulent force in his mind until the very end of his life. Just prior to his suicide he left an urgent admonition to Germans to carry on, after his death, and bring about a resurrection of national socialism by observing a "painstaking adherence to race laws."¹³

A scrutiny of these extraordinary, revealing notes on the "Monumental History of Mankind" suggests a wide scope of Hitler's megalomania with its centrifugal attraction to the life, success, and nature of the Jewish people. These notes can be seen as Hitler's attempt to think on a high level of abstraction; in the true vein of world improvers, he searched for Eternal Truth to convince himself that he had discovered what has eluded the best of minds in the intellectual history of human beings.

He did eventually sit down to write a book, about five years later. His *Mein Kampf* bore little resemblance to his "Monumental History," though many of his ideas about Jews surfaced readily. This time, he paid virtually no attention to the Bible, nor did he acknowledge how much he thought the history of Jews had been a source of inspiration to him.

1914-1925

8

A Criminal Mind at Work

"He was, among other things, quite simply a mass murderer."¹ This was Sebastian Haffner's opinion—perhaps his ultimate judgment. Hitler's crimes indeed sent chills through a world already saturated with violence and racial antagonism. Most disturbing to the Western world was the German origin of these evil deeds and the driving emotions behind the expressions of racial hatred. Almost as mystifying is the question why Germans could not have anticipated the reactions of other nations to their blustering, hostile treatment of their Jewish fellow citizens—long before the Holocaust was even conceived. "The German enigma is not Hitler," wrote Peter Viereck in his philosophical reflections on the Nazi phenomenon, "nor is it the behavior of either frauds or police sadists. . . . The real enigma is the honest unsadistic German majority that unleashed them rather than throwing them into jail."²

The legal containment of Hitler had worked once, briefly, when Hitler attempted to overthrow the Bavarian government in 1923 in one massive stroke of brazen effrontery. He ended up in court and was sentenced to five years' imprisonment for what was then called "the crime of high treason."³ Nine months later he was paroled and released with the help of the prison director, who offered sympathetic support against his better judgment that Hitler was finally a reasonable politician who had learned his lesson. Hitler was not as yet permitted to publish his party newspaper, the *Völkischer Beobachter*, and his party itself remained outlawed. That was not to last for very long, however. He had been discharged four days before Christmas, and once the holidays were over, he met with the Bavarian prime minister, Dr. Heinrich Held, shortly after New Year's on January 4, 1925, to confess humbly that the Putsch had just been a terrible mistake.

Hitler explained further how much he had seen the light and would uphold the authority of the state from here on. Held fell for the effective persuasion of Hitler's conartistry and agreed to lift the ban on party and paper, reluctantly as he may have done so.

Hitler set out immediately to begin where he had left off prior to his imprisonment and frantically reorganized his party. In reasserting his sole leadership he demanded absolute obedience to his wishes. By the end of February of that year, he gave his first blistering speech to a huge crowd of old faithful party hacks and Nazi sympathizers in the familiar haunt of the Bürgerbräukeller in Munich. Following his customary mindset, he immediately attacked the Jews and made a prophetic statement about what he would do for Germany's recovery. The Bavarian authorities were appalled and promptly imposed a speaking ban for two years for such incendiary oratory. Defiant and undaunted, Hitler continued to speak in closed meetings and to private audiences.

His speech on February 27, 1925, had clearly shown that the devil was not exorcised. More than ever he expressed his conviction that he held the correct views on what ailed Germany and the remedies needed to get the country moving again. In fact, there was only one correct view—his.

Hitler's decision to bypass the legal system and still come into power legitimately cannot be said to reflect the workings of a criminal mind, but his superficial law-abiding behavior changed quickly once he had gained full political control. While he was jailed in 1925, he was called subversive. But as soon as he was installed as chancellor of the government on January 30, 1933, it was difficult to call him subversive, even though he quickly escalated his coercive tactics to a terroristic control of the German people. Having taken all major hurdles in a race to achieve absolute control in pursuit of his long-range goals to be the head of the government, he did not have to fear being arrested and brought to trial. There was no opposition nor any system of checks and balances for any charges to be pressed nor any court able to try him.

For those Germans in Hitler's day who considered the radical nationalism of their Führer a remarkable reincarnation of the best of German history and for those who saw in his ramrod bearing and fierce resolve the admirable qualities of self-sacrifice and patriotic devotion, the idea of bringing an indictment for criminal violation would have appeared wickedly absurd. But for those who considered his political conduct dangerous and saw in him an uncontrollable zealot making ominous pronouncements on what he was about to do, accusing him of being a criminal seemed the only fitting response.

It should not be surprising, therefore, to see Hitler viewed by many historians and writers as a national leader with a criminal mind. Even the calm, cautious, and carefully reasoning Hitler researcher Eberhard Jäckel allowed himself a brief, personal reflection in recollecting his feelings when

1934 43

the vein of a militia. To Hitler, this was treasonous. Röhm and many SA leaders and members of the lower echelons were violently killed in a criminal style masked as revolutionary justice. Hitler was a man of few words in sanctioning these crimes, simply saying, "The measures taken on June 30, July 1 and 2, to suppress treasonous assault are legal by acts of self defense by the state."⁷ Ten days later Hitler tried to justify himself in greater detail before the Reichstag by offering a lengthy, rambling, and self-serving explanation in which he treated the Röhm affair as a mutiny to be

suppressed in accordance with immutable laws made of iron. If anyone reproaches me and asks why I did not turn to the regular courts of justice for a conviction of the offenders, then I can say to him: in this hour I was responsible for the fate of the German people, thereby I became the Chief Justice of the people. . . . I gave the orders to shoot the ringleaders . . . and I let it be known for all times to come that anyone who raises his hand to strike against the state, then certain death is going to be his lot."⁸

July
1934

Hitler made clear that he represented the state and that his word was law.

Four years later the president of the Nazi League of Jurors, Hans Frank, aptly articulated the guiding philosophy of the Nazis by acknowledging the supremacy of Hitler's role in Germany's legal system. He said, "In the formulation of the law, the historical will of the Führer is implemented, and the fulfillment of this historical will of the Führer is not contingent on any prerequisites of the laws of the state."⁹

1938

The absoluteness of Hitler's position—his own will power—brought anyone who opposed him into jeopardy; it was a claim to the infallibility of his ideological tenets. When he felt threatened by anyone not sharing the Nazi faith, revengeful, murderous impulses came into play immediately. Always active and potentially ready to be unleashed, these hateful impulses were mobilized once more at the outbreak of the Second World War when the president of the World Zionist Congress, Chaim Weizmann, the future president of the State of Israel, declared war on Germany in behalf of all Jews. Hitler had felt suspicious about the long-range objectives of Jews ever since he had read about a so-called Jewish world conspiracy to achieve world dominance as outlined in the fraudulent *Protocols of the Elders of Zion*. Weizmann's declaration of war, made on September 5, 1939, and published three days later in the *Jewish Chronicle*,¹⁰ confirmed Hitler's paranoid belief in Jews as being collectively the "enemy of the German Reich." Now Hitler had proof that a world conspiracy against him existed. Once such a dreadful thought had been implanted in his mind, the plan for a Holocaust was but one step away. To kill the enemy is the purpose of war. According to Hitler, Jews were now the declared enemy and were slated for destruction long before the Wannsee Conference convened in January 1942 to formalize the extermination plans.

1939

1942

Psychologically, Hitler's criminality can be said to be a fusion of deeply felt fears of Jewish power aimed at defeating his own objectives of world conquest. Hitler was criminally involved to the extent to which his extreme brutality and criminal practices of the regime had been motivated, caused, and facilitated by a personal, paranoid perception of how the world ought to be, that is, free of Jews.

Many years ago a long-forgotten Bulgarian psychiatrist, practicing in Germany, by the name N. Schipkovensky, introduced in his book *Mental Illness and Murder* the term "murder of liberation." He pointed out how some murderers felt compelled to kill in order to free themselves from oppressive fear. By eliminating a hated person, the murderer eliminated his own inner dread of being harmed or victimized. Schipkovensky was convinced that certain abnormal conditions of the mind mobilized this kind of murderous behavior. Thus, if we accept that Hitler felt compelled to act because of a dread of delusional thoughts that he must kill to rescue human civilization, then he had to eliminate any threats to the success of his ideology. In this perception he can be rightly regarded as a criminal. The concept of Hitler's committing "murder of liberation" appears useful in explaining the dynamics of his criminal conduct.

Hitler's mind always provided him with a self-assuring rationalization for the necessity of doing what he did. He was governed by a sense of personal truth, all lost in distortions and preoccupations with the looming dangers posed by the Jewish people. In this idiosyncratic thinking, the distinction between what is real and unreal was lost. As the power of irrational thinking gradually took hold without impairing his intellectual efficiency, Hitler's criminality became an intricate part of his mental pathology.

There are, of course, people who have a distinct personality structure that prevents them from making a normal adjustment and prevents them from fitting into the organized social life of human beings. They are not regarded as mentally ill in a narrow application of the concept, but they are disturbed people nonetheless who are known as criminals or psychopaths. Their outstanding characteristics are their tendency to deviate from the established norms of social conduct and to fail in developing a pattern of adequate moral and ethical behavior. Hitler has repeatedly been grouped into this category of people.¹¹ It can be argued that his long history of moral and ethical blunting and the alarming absence of a humanitarian conception of human relationships justified the assumption that he had a criminal mind.

These characteristic failings bring Hitler across the border into the anti-social mentality of people called criminals. They are often strong-willed and known for committing larceny of all kinds, forgeries, thievery, rape, blackmail, embezzlement, robbery, or breaking and entering. What Hitler had in common with these individuals was abysmal self-centeredness and emotional indifference toward the needs of others. They do not experience any desire for closeness or affection, nor do they have any capacity for

War: Father of All Things

1942

On May 30, 1942, Hitler delivered a secret speech¹ in the Berlin Sportpalast before 10,000 young lieutenants who had just graduated following a gruelling three-month officer-training program. He was at his charismatic best in stirring the patriotic spirit of young idealistic minds, still filled with the desire to join the battle and go off to fight the enemy, still desirous to find heroism in their willingness to make the ultimate sacrifice and assure the continual existence of the nation by dying for *Führer und Vaterland*.

He delivered his speech without preparation and used no notes, drawing entirely from the depth of his convictions. All the more does this cathartic outpouring tell us about the guiding thoughts in Hitler's mind. Entitled "Was the Second World War Unavoidable for Germany?" his speech answered his own question by trying to persuade the audience of the inevitability of war in human life. World War II was thus but a manifestation of the eternal flow of the violent self-assertion observed in human existence, a struggle for survival and dominance.

Hitler elaborated his familiar theme: The strong will survive if nations submit to "the iron logic of nature." Only those who prove the fittest in the end will have earned the right to live. He cited history as "evidence" for his thesis. Many nations who had proven to be weak disappeared from this earth without a trace, whereas those who had been willing to make sacrifices and asserted themselves by fighting secured their survival. Any overview of human existence will find this truth confirmed. "The principle of eternal selection favors the tough and superior," he preached.

Hitler explained to the young men in their freshly tailored officers' uniforms that war was a process of national renewal and strengthening. To bolster his position he quoted the ancient Greek philosopher Heraclitus,

to once mentioned in his reflections on human life that war is the father of all things. To make his point stronger, Hitler elevated Heraclitus to a great military philosopher" to suit his own propaganda purposes, having no compunction about singling out just one idea from among Heraclitus's highly complex and sophisticated thoughts.

Applying his ideas on war to Germany, Hitler stressed the necessity for conquest to assure living space for the German people. He conjured up images of Germany as a crowded, starving nation whose surplus population would have to spill over into the vast empty regions of the east to become self-sufficient in the future to feed itself. A sea of Asian humanity was about to flood to Europe, he was convinced, threatening Germany's future existence. It meant to make it his personal mission, not just for the sake of Germans but for the sake of civilization, to stem this flood.

His speech was intended to boost the morale of his young officers and give them strength to cope with their growing apprehension over the possibility of an unimaginable tragedy shaping up for their country following two decisive defeats before Moscow in the winter of 1941-42 and in Stalinabad a year later, just before Hitler gave his talk. Barely three years had passed since Hitler had launched his war to materialize his long-range lofty visions, but neither he nor his 10,000 newly appointed lieutenants were able to admit to themselves that the scales of the fortunes of war had already tipped irreversibly in favor of the Allied powers.

Hitler had given a similarly secret speech² back in 1937, two years before he had launched his sway of conquest. On November 27 of that year he addressed the graduating class of one of the political training schools for the newly rising generation of party leaders, educated in the Ordensburg at Wehrhagen, in one of the most beautiful spots in the Bavarian Alps. Hitler talked about "German History and the Fate of the Nation." This speech is perhaps more revealing of his thinking than his talk on the necessity for war, given at a critical tide-turning moment in the German war effort.

In 1937 Hitler was still riding the crest of his successes during peace time. Germans felt proud of having rebuilt their country under Hitler's leadership and were not living in anticipation of a war in spite of a covert feverish armament program. What Hitler had in mind for these Germans was something else, quite different from bringing the country back from economic and social chaos. He had willed war.

In his powerful oratory he aimed at conveying to the starry-eyed recruits of his political elite his unshaken faith in his ability to mobilize the German people to instill in them a renewed faith in his historical mission to reshape Europe by restructuring the alignment of the Great Powers to assure Germany's rightfully superior position among the nations.

He exhorted the young men in his audience to support his grand plan to bring about a national fulfillment of a 2,000-year search of the German people for the creation of a mighty, dynamic, and dominant Reich. Hitler

1942

1937

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His speech was intended to boost the morale of his young officers and give them strength to cope with their growing apprehension over the possibility of an unimaginable tragedy shaping up for their country following two decisive defeats before Moscow in the winter of 1941-42 and in Stalingrad a year later, just before Hitler gave his talk. Barely three years had passed since Hitler had launched his war to materialize his long-range lofty visions, but neither he nor his 10,000 newly appointed lieutenants were able to admit to themselves that the scales of the fortunes of war had already tipped irreversibly in favor of the Allied powers.

Hitler had given a similarly secret speech² back in 1937, two years before he had launched his sway of conquest. On November 27 of that year he addressed the graduating class of one of the political training schools for the newly rising generation of party leaders, educated in the Ordensburg at Wehrhagen, in one of the most beautiful spots in the Bavarian Alps. Hitler talked about "German History and the Fate of the Nation." This speech is perhaps more revealing of his thinking than his talk on the necessity of war, given at a critical tide-turning moment in the German war effort.

In 1937 Hitler was still riding the crest of his successes during peace time. Germans felt proud of having rebuilt their country under Hitler's leadership and were not living in anticipation of a war in spite of a covert feverish armament program. What Hitler had in mind for these Germans was something else, quite different from bringing the country back from economic and social chaos. He had willed war.

In his powerful oratory he aimed at conveying to the starry-eyed recruits his political elite his unshaken faith in his ability to mobilize the German people to instill in them a renewed faith in his historical mission to reshape Europe by restructuring the alignment of the Great Powers to assure Germany's rightfully superior position among the nations.

He exhorted the young men in his audience to support his grand plan to bring about a national fulfillment of a 2,000-year search of the German people for the creation of a mighty, dynamic, and dominant Reich. Hitler

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pointed out that to achieve such a gigantic goal, there was the need imprint on the minds of all Germans a deep appreciation of Prussian military discipline and sense of duty and obedience in order to transform community of people into a community of warriors. To accomplish such far-reaching objective, Hitler expected to rely on the contributions of at least one of them—Germany's future leaders. Hitler then told them of the inevitability of war in their lifetime and defined war as an essential part of his long-range plans for Germany. Pointing to the inevitability of war, he stressed the necessity for preparing the German people for the moment when war, soon to arrive, would be ready to follow the course he had charted for them.

These speeches were not made public and became available for analysis only after the war. Fortunately for historians, Hitler's words were captured and stored. Carefully chosen people in Hitler's entourage had been permitted to record these speeches, as if they were a new national treasure. Just as was done with his table conversations at headquarters during the war, his words were captured by faithful disciples who filled their notebooks with lengthy notations to document every utterance of their Führer to preserve for posterity his thoughts as evidence of his uniqueness, an example of the depth of his perspectives. Every word was precious, as if each were an expression of a new living faith.

Although he made no reference to Jews in his early talk to the recruits of party leadership, Hitler did not fail to remind his young officers in 1934 that they were fighting to stem "the flood of Bolshevik hordes of Asians, and he urged them to recognize that "the driving force behind these waves is the international Jew who believes the time has come to create his own Thousand-Year Reich by exploiting the people of the world after they have been deprived of their intelligence first."

The central theme of Hitler's convictions had surfaced again. Even though he maligned Jews, he did not tell his young lieutenants that he had already decreed that Jews were slated for extermination. No mention was made at the Wannsee Conference, held four months earlier in January 1942, in which Hitler's intentions to kill Jews had been set in motion. The preparation for the massacre of European Jewry was in full swing by the time he gave his talk. In Hitler's view, war was a blessing for humankind. He abhorred the idea of coexistence of nations or ethnic groups. To him, the world was black or white, good or evil, superior or inferior, with no room for compromise. His paranoid notion prevailed: Jews must go or Germans will perish.

Nor did Hitler tell his political recruits in 1937 that he had meant to start a war soon. When he unleashed his army in 1939 by turning on a small neighboring and hopelessly outmatched nation, Poland, he was acting not on a sudden, reckless impulse born out of a perverted application of an obsession with power but in a planful execution of his schemes. The earlier interpretation of Hitler as a power-hungry opportunist, who seized the oc-

casion in disjointed and chaotic times to satisfy his insatiable craving for insidious control over other nations does not take into account the long history of his obsessional thinking.

Since his boyhood in Austria Hitler had been fascinated by war making. In his brief account of his family life in *Mein Kampf*, he tells us of having looked with much excitement at a two-volume illustrated history of the Franco-Prussian War of 1870-71, which became a great source of inspiration to him about a soldier's life. It made him forever spellbound about anything related to war. Indeed, all great events in German history stirred his emotions. He admired the times of the Prussian War of Liberation following the collapse of Napoleon's once-glorious army in his ill-fated Russian campaign and in the Battle of Waterloo (1815). He regretted not having lived a hundred years earlier in those heroic days "when a man was still able to be a man."³ He also tells us of how the Boer War (1899-1902) aroused his imagination. As a ten-year-old boy he had enjoyed reading in the newspapers about the defiant challenge of the South African Boers to the British Empire, then at the height of its colonial expansion. He recalled how grateful he was "to have been a witness of the heroic struggle from a distance."⁴ To him, the Boer War was an epic contest of a David-like warrior, the Boer, against the British Goliath. It was like *Wetterleuchten*, he said, like summer lightning in the charged climate of the confrontational European politics before the "outbreak of the hurricane,"⁵ the Great War, then still twelve years in the future.

Wars were breaking out here and there all over the world during his young impressionable years. When he was fifteen, the Russo-Japanese War erupted in 1904 in the Far East. He wished for a Japanese victory because to him it meant a triumph over Slavs. Already in his adolescent years he attached a racial significance to international conflicts and expressed the farfetched expectation of a necessary, similar defeat of the Slavic population in his native Austria, where Slavs occupied vast territories in the multiethnic, sprawling and ailing Habsburg Empire.

In the Balkan region a large number of minorities carried their nationalistic causes and grievances right to the doorsteps of the government in Vienna. Hitler was made continuously aware of the aspirations of these ethnic groups and listened to the bellicose voices of ardent nationalists, driven by their convictions of the superiority and virtues of their own nationality and he established meanness and viciousness of their enemies. He despised these nationalities, even though he himself was an ardent pan-German nationalist.

Soon another war broke out. This time right next door to Vienna. The first Balkan War (1912-13) mobilized strong Slavic sentiments. A coalition of Serbia, Bulgaria, Greece, and Montenegro challenged Turkey, anxious to preserve whatever was left of the once-mighty Ottoman Empire. Turkey lost the war and was practically pushed out of the community of European

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These developments were not lost on the young Hitler. They reinforced his belief that international disputes should be settled by a show of arms. Anything less would mean lack of national pride and plain lack of guts. He referred to the First Balkan War as a "gust of wind,"⁶ a prelude to an approaching catastrophe of the imminent clash of the Great Powers. Hitler, wars were uncontrollable and unavoidable in the struggle among nations. He likened the course of political and ethnic conflict to the predictable violence in nature, the forces of wind and weather, of lightning and hurricanes.

Wars were but fierce competitive and noble human enterprises. The battles, the victories and defeats, the fatigue and terror, and the death and mutilation were an expression of a perpetual human search probing the limits of endurance for individuals in their effort to prove their fortitude, bravery, and strength. To Hitler, wars were but acute rivalries among nations to determine the outcome of a savage process of sorting out who among the nations would dominate whom.

He held an old-fashioned, almost medieval view of warfare as some kind of legitimate instrument of politics, as if the experiences were tactical challenges and cleverly conducted maneuvers to establish dominance over others. He failed to see that they would usher in a new era of mass destruction. The fateful practices of major nations in the days of the *Grosse Politik* turned war inevitably and predictably into mass murder. Hitler himself experienced this style of modern warfare in all its horrid consequences as a soldier in 1914-18, yet this exposure to human tragedy did not change his thinking. To him, war remained an expression of a fundamental, inexhaustible human need for aggression and destructive rivalry. He held no vision of war as an indescribable inhumanity, a time to shiver.

This view did not necessarily reflect Hitler's personal conception. If throughout the Western world, thinkers in the new era of rapid advancement in science and technology seized upon Charles Darwin's theory about human evolution. A new generation of Social Darwinists emerged who sought to ponder what, if anything, this new conception of laws governing the relationship among living organisms meant for the struggle of survival of the fittest among the nations. The widespread use of natural selection as vindication of militarism and imperialism, mainly in the subjugation of weak races, was readily applied to international relations.

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Freud viewed war making as an integral element of human nature and based his conviction that "killing an enemy satisfies an instinctual inclination."⁸ To Freud, it was a matter of a "general principle . . . that the conflicting interests between men are settled by the use of violence."⁹ He spoke the language of psychoanalysis in evoking his theory about the biological psychological makeup of human beings, according to which war is a manifestation of human aggressive instincts and, affecting every living creature, an instinctual drive toward death.

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Though Freud believed human existence was governed by "domination and the power of the stronger over the weaker," he never had the greater might—domination by brute violence or by intellect supported by intellect.¹² He was also convinced that this "original pattern of things" had to undergo a transformation to move from violence to a peaceful pattern of behavior. His thoughts always searched for this path: a way out to war. In his letter to Einstein he explained how he had been fully aware of "the perfection of instruments of destruction. A future

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war might involve the extermination of one or perhaps both of the antagonists,"¹⁴ and he urged finding "a formula for indirect methods of combating war."¹⁵ He proposed his own formula by spelling out a three-pronged approach: (1) to "encourage the growth of emotional ties among people," (2) to help people identify with each other and support "whatever leads people to share important interests [and so] produces a communal feeling,"¹⁷ and (3) to make efforts "to create a human community in which people can subordinate their instinctual life to the dominance of reason. Nothing else could unite people so completely and tenaciously."¹⁸

Freud was fully realistic in his views and recognized that his endeavor to find ways to stop wars may be "an utopian expectation."¹⁹ He was nonetheless filled with unbridled optimism in his belief in the evolution of human civilization and said, "Whatever fosters the growth of culture works the same time against war."²⁰ Here lies the unbridgeable difference between Hitler's and Freud's positions. Freud believed in the possibility of modifying and changing human behavior by gaining mastery over our instinctual drives; whereas Hitler viewed human nature as unchanging and driven by the need to dominate.

In the Darwinian and Freudian century Hitler was exposed to many views of wars as an innate part of human biological heritage. Being neither a thinker nor a scientist searching to clarify deeper human motivations for behavior, he gave free rein to his personal convictions and acted on his dogmatic assumptions about racial differences among people, the right of nations based on might, and the predestined role he and Germans had been assigned by Fate.

The German dictator perceived in war making an archaic urge to fulfill an indefinable purpose of life itself. War was the result of the eternal struggle among nations. It was an "ultimate weapon with which a nation fights for its daily bread."²¹ He perceived any search for containment of violence by showing a desire for peace as a negation of nature itself. Longing for peace was but a reflection of softness and decadence and would ultimately spell doom for any nation willing to submit to a stronger and more aggressive neighbor.

The pathological dimension of this thinking can be seen in Hitler's failure to view war as also providing an intoxication with power that creates the dangerous illusion that a leader of soldiers has the right and the ability to punish and kill not only the enemy but also all those who do not obey the orders of the leader. Hitler thrived on a sense of mutual vulnerability as if the application of power in torture, incarceration, and killing one's own subjects for disobedience or defiance were but an expression of concerns for shared humanity. Killing was elevated to the level of a moral act serving the protection of one's own kind.

He justified murderous thoughts by evoking the key doctrines of his racial ideology. Without the insight to recognize that he elevated inhumanity

o a virtue. Hitler was convinced his inhumanity was for the good of humankind. A mind capable of conceiving a convulsive program of mass killing as an extension of war and capable of a systematic execution of such a plan has crossed the threshold into the shadowy world of madness.

In searching for a clear and concise expression of Hitler's basic position on war, one notes that nothing captures his thinking as well as the content of his two secret speeches. He had talked as if going to war were a highly moral ethos, not unlike the idealized conception of medieval knighthood. He was convinced that war had shaped history throughout the ages, and the issue would always be domination and subjugation. Then and now, war provides the key to understanding history and is a creative and procreative human activity by which nations rejuvenate themselves, mature, and become able to assert themselves in the perilous voyage to renew their fitness and assure survival. To Hitler, history has always been governed by the universally valid and sacred principles of nature, no different in modern times than in the past. Hitler denied any progression toward a more humane and civilized form of human existence in which war should no longer hold a place—as Freud had defined the evolution of human existence.

Hitler's thinking allowed no room for the possibility of an international community of nations coexisting without war. There would be animosities, conflict, discontent, querulousness, and injustice, to be sure; but there would be no war. Hitler could not conceive of such a world and saw no necessity for the abolition of war. He could not conceive of the idea that sooner or later his reliance on violence and his refusal to avoid an abuse of power would come close to destroying the world. Hitler's thinking was arrested in the past. He belonged to the group of people who believed to have discovered in social Darwinism a fundamental principle according to which peoples and nations relate to each other. Hitler carried these abstract, social science ideas to the extreme by believing in the necessity of war as a process of annihilating the weak. In following this course, he failed to see that it is indeed possible for nations to put a permanent end to civilization. He was willing to do that all for the sake of his pathology-tinged ideology.

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The Pasteur-Koch Complex

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Hitler avoided intellectual exchanges at all costs. He detested entering dialogue for mutual stimulation or clarification. Impatient to listen—essentially unable to listen—he had grown to expect to be listened to and admired and worshiped instead. When he was still in the habit of giving long speeches to large audiences early in his career, he felt exhilarated. Exhausted at the end and drenched in perspiration, he glowed with satisfaction over having succeeded once again in whipping a crowd into state of frenzy.

After he had launched his war, there was no time, nor any need, for speeches. He was in full control of the country and had made sure he was on top of the military hierarchy. He was the absolute ruler and his generals the obedient servants. Spending all his time at headquarters, he began to miss his audiences. He created new ones for himself by gathering around him secretaries, orderlies, and lesser staff workers during breaks in his heavy work schedule. In this intimate circle, he set out to pontificate, to impress at least someone with the "profoundness" of his thoughts. These monologues, as they were aptly called, often lasted deep into the night. They were the equivalent of his speeches and were written down and later published as *Hitler's Secret Conversations*.

The content of Hitler's so-called conversations provides an invaluable glimpse into the strange workings of his mind. Behind his obscure and meandering style, the basic themes of Hitler's Nazi ideology can be detected like the leitmotif in a Wagnerian music drama: an ever-smoldering anti-Semitism fueled by his fanatical nationalism and antibolshevism. His small personal audience failed to recognize the fundamentally sinister aspects of nazism, with its explicit claim to be the only valid orientation

achieving a betterment of the human condition, just as his large, public audiences in prewar years had failed to perceive the dangers of his visions. Among the flood of pseudo-intellectual reflections on the meaning of human existence, expressed without any sense of zest for life and void of any humanistic considerations, can be found occasionally startling revelations of the nature of the internal forces that propelled Hitler's entire being.

On one of these occasions he met with Reichsführer Heinrich Himmler and a Danish major of the SS division "Viking," in the evening of February 22, 1942. He gave a minispeech, as usual, venting his chronic hostility toward Jews and paying tribute to his old party crony Julius Streicher, the publisher of an obscenely slanderous and provocative anti-Semitic tabloid, *Der Stürmer*. Hitler praised Streicher's approach of attacking Jews through reports on scandals, alleged crimes, and acts of corruption involving Jewish people and said, "The eyes of the world were finally opened up to the true nature of Jewish people and their danger to society."¹ He then expounded his conviction that "the discovery of the Jewish virus is one of the greatest revolutions that has taken place in the world. The struggle we are waging now is the same kind as in the past century, that of Pasteur and Koch. How many social diseases can be traced to the Jewish virus! We shall regain our health only after we have exterminated the Jews."² Hitler's reference to Pasteur and Koch bared his long efforts to base his ideological thinking on scientific grounds and served him as a perfect rationalization for his sadism.

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What possible connection did Hitler discover between the work of two scientists who had devoted their lives to the betterment of the human race and his own obsession with destroying Jewish people? Something must have struck a chord when early in his life he heard of Pasteur and Koch. Their major scientific breakthroughs must have fascinated him as he pondered the meaning of the world, which he did with intensity. He incorporated their ideas in his frenetic search for solutions to the problems of an ailing society. On a conscious and preconscious level, Hitler found in Pasteur's and Koch's contributions a model that became the nuclear element in his paranoid system and assumed a major role in his entire emotional life. This mental set should be called the Pasteur-Koch complex.

A renowned French chemist, Louis Pasteur (1822-95) was among the scientific giants of the late nineteenth century when Hitler grew up in rural Austria and became receptive to the ideas of the leading men in his time. Pasteur had reasoned without finding proof that sickness in animals and people can be caused by bacteria. Support for this notion was provided soon after by the German researcher Robert Koch (1843-1910), who won the Nobel Prize for his discovery in 1905, at a time when Hitler was a sixteen-year-old living in Linz.

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The origin of the Pasteur-Koch complex can be traced to two sets of experiences, one concrete and specific, a reaction to the traumatic loss of

his mother as a result of her fatal illness, and the other abstract and global, an idea in his mind equating the state of health of the individual human body with the state of health of people as a whole, the *Volkskörper*.

The story of his mother's illness was a critical element in Hitler's life because of his unusually close attachment to her. When he learned about the seriousness of her breast cancer, he knew his mother was doomed. He held no illusion about the possibility of a recovery and reported, "From the beginning it offered little prospect of recovery."³ He felt desperate and hoped that desperate measures might save her after all. He lived in an age when a new understanding of the nature of human illnesses was dawning as a result of the advances made by the sensational contributions of Pasteur and Koch in clearing up the mysterious causes of diseases and death. His mother's health could be restored, perhaps, if the microorganisms causing her catastrophic illness could be killed.

When death threatened, there was no time for half measures, young Hitler was convinced. At the time, his mother had been under the care of Dr. Eduard Bloch, who may or may not have explained to Hitler the necessity for drastic remedies. In any case, a mastectomy was performed and the open surgical wounds were treated with iodoform bandages, as was customary in those days. This yellowish, evil-smelling, crystalline ointment was used as an antiseptic and known to be poisonous after prolonged application.

Watching his mother's physical agony and seeing Dr. Bloch unable to stop her progressive illness, Hitler hoped the radical treatment would combat the disease-causing agents destroying her body. In witnessing her life-and-death struggle, he thought Fate itself had provided him with critical insight. The notion of employing radical solutions to cure ills had entered his mind and was adopted by him as a universally valid principle. He fell back on this notion in his future political career whenever he faced a politically or militarily desperate situation.

What Fate had taught him was that the suffering of a human body is analogous to the "social diseases" of the collective body of people: "To cure a national body of deep and grave illnesses is not a matter of finding a prescription that in itself is completely non-toxic, but frequently of fighting one poison with another. To remove a condition recognized as deadly, one must have the courage to impose and even interfere with decision: that themselves harbor dangers."⁴ It was this point of view that dictated his behavior when he initiated the Holocaust.

The concept of social disease was not his own. As an observer of the social scene when still living in Vienna, Hitler had been groping for an understanding of the conditions in human society and aimed at identifying those forces shaping the lives of people and nations. In the process he had also encountered the writings of Paul de Lagarde, a vicious anti-Semite who referred to Jews as carriers of social diseases and labeled them the

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source of decadence and decay, *Fäulnis und Verwesung*.⁵ This notion captured the intellectual climate in Vienna and was readily adopted by Hitler.

The concept of social disease fused in Hitler's mind with the teachings of the two bacteriologists, Pasteur and Koch. Ever since, he saw in Jews "bacteria in human society" and "malignant organisms within the body of our nation,"⁶ the "international, racial maggots,"⁷ and simply the "masters of international poisoning and racial corruption."⁸ He decided to be the spokesman for an answer to this perceived problem in society and took it upon himself to become a self-appointed crusader for methods of salvaging the health of humankind. He was convinced the world would be grateful to him for following his inner voice to eradicate evil and do so with courage and faith. The world had to be freed of Jews, "the most diabolic creatures in existence,"⁹ he said.

Like Pasteur and Koch, Hitler saw himself as a benefactor of humankind. Just as a physician kills bacteria and viruses through applying medication to restore health, Hitler felt justified in killing people to save human civilization. Killing, in the last analysis, was to Hitler an affirmation of life. He "knew" Jews had proven to be a vital threat to the cultural survival of people and had to be combated through removal or control, or the radical method of killing. In planning for the Final Solution, Hitler thought he was rightfully applying the procedures of modern medical technology on a massive scale as a health-restoring program to assure human existence in the future. The power of the Pasteur-Koch complex became the cornerstone of his paranoid system. By conceiving of Jews as the equivalent of bacteria, he made the idea of killing acceptable to himself. In failing to make any distinction between bacteria and human beings, Hitler revealed his incapability of experiencing humane feelings or any guilt or any awareness of the abhorrent meaning of what he was doing. Only a mind in the grip of madness can succeed in depersonalizing violence and rationalize destructiveness on such an unbelievably massive scale.

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The Origin of His Hatred

The dark figure of Hitler—vicious, violent, and visionary—emerged from nowhere out of the anonymity of the Kaiser's army to rise to a position of power of unprecedented proportions to make an attempt to redirect defeated Germany toward a new destiny. He had no command experience and had not even risen to any kind of rank, and yet this Private, First Class was capable of acquiring in a very short time the mastery of a huge, modern military machine to set out to conquer at a breath-taking speed. Behind this outburst of military energy lay the sinister purpose of settling a score with rivalrous and menacing enemies, principally Jews. The mainspring of such horrendous inner drives was an intense raging hatred. But why Jews? Why war? Why genocide?

The search for answers should focus on the formative years of Hitler's life, long before he became a public figure. Half of his life was already spent by the time he decided to become a politician. The age of thirty is a remarkably late time for such a crucial decision to be made. But once made, there was nothing timid in Hitler's style of acting on his destructive obsessions; and from the beginning, he proved to be less a great statesman and more the personification of a great demagogue.

The clues are few for pinpointing the origin of the grotesque images of Jews Hitler had formed in his mind and retained before they surfaced with a vengeance. We only can know that certain convictions had taken shape during his early years. They were acquired and then sustained unchanged to his dying day, when he left a message to the world revealing the unyielding quality of his mutilated and strangely ecstatic inner life. In the end, there remained hardly any Germans able to find in his prophetic po

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litical statements any inspiration, as many had found during the heyday of nazism for more than a dozen years. 12/5

The setting was Hitler's fifty-sixth birthday on April 20, 1945. He celebrated this event in the morbid atmosphere of the underground bunker of his Berlin chancellery, which was by then ruined and reduced to rubble like much of the capital itself. His vast powers and once-awesome Reich were crumbling rapidly. All but two weeks were left of the euphoric twelve years—about to come to an end in a spectacular collapse. At fifty-six Hitler was by no means an old man, yet he looked old, worn, and spent. He was facing the bitter end; his choice: suicide. Many times in his life in moments of acute crisis he had contemplated taking his own life, but this time there was no way out. He faced the inevitable collapse not only of his creation, the Third Reich, but also of an artificially built-up world in his own mind. Up to this point, this world of fantasies, hopes, and dreams had been so real to Hitler that the brewing catastrophe had been unthinkable. Hitler had lived in a world of his own, constructed with cunning and terror. He had gambled it all away for the sake of power and the realization of his visions. When facing the final onslaught of the Red Army, he knew he had no choice but to kill himself or be killed or be captured or face some other inglorious end.

Nine days after his birthday he was ready to face his moment of truth. He set out to make a last statement to the surviving world—to history itself. On April 29, at four o'clock in the afternoon, he signed his last will and testament, hastily dictated earlier that day. It was his last written document, meant to be left to posterity as a final all-encompassing message. He framed a revealing conclusion: "Above all, I order the leadership of the nation and the people to uphold painstakingly our racial laws and to demonstrate merciless resistance to the poison of mankind: International Jewry."¹ This thought reflects the essence of his disturbed mind: a paranoid fear of powerful Jews with "poisonous" influence on the world, so dangerous, in fact, that they require "merciless" methods to be stopped. Hitler killed himself holding convictions he had harbored in his mind all his adult life. *

He had started his political career in 1919 with a similar expression of undisguised hostility toward the Jewish people in a letter dated September 16, 1919. The Gemlich letter, as it became known, written to the military liaison officer in Munich, Adolf Gemlich, was the first political statement with which Hitler entered history. He had spoken up before, but only in private, and nothing was put in writing. He was known to have mumbled and stumbled, moaned and groaned about the so-called evil doings of Jews, but he had never taken a public stand to make visible to anyone the depth of his rage against them. 1919

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absolute necessity of "removing" Jews from German society. In a few cramped pages he spelled out ideas that mirrored the alarming nature of his well-entrenched anti-Semitism. The Jew, he wrote,

has preserved his race and peculiarity more keenly than any of the other people of nations among whom he lives, and thus results the fact that among us a non-German alien is not willing nor able to sacrifice its racial characteristics. Religion, socialism, democracy . . . are to him only a means to an end of satisfying his craving for money and dominance.²

1919 Proceeding to suggest his own solution to stop such a development, he declared, "Anti-Semitism . . . must lead to the planned, judicial destruction and the elimination of all privileges Jews enjoy. . . . Its ultimate goal, however, must be the removal of Jews altogether."³ In this last sentence he revealed his potential for the brutality displayed twenty years later. In this first political statement he offered an ominous glimpse of what was yet to come in the far future.

These two crucial documents—the Gemlich letter at the beginning and Hitler's last will and testament at the end of his life—symbolized the disturbed nature of his thinking. Whereas the Gemlich letter preserves an element of ambiguity regarding the exact meaning behind his demand for the "removal" of Jews, his last dictation in his life made amply clear how much his conception of eliminating Jews had crystallized. The so-called Jewish Problem, in his eyes, could be solved only through drastic and violent means.

His early reference to "removal" sounded vague in its implications. He was fully aware of his own relative powerlessness at that stage of his career. He was still an unknown, upstart politician who would not have been taken seriously had he suggested extermination camps as a solution to social problems. He had to achieve absolute control over the country first, before being able to exercise the option of force and violence. Nonetheless, the Gemlich letter permits us to draw several conclusions about Hitler's personality:

First, Hitler revealed in his psychological makeup a potential for ruthlessness and destructive behavior.

Second, he showed a stereotyped conception of Jews, failing to individualize or to target his perceptions more selectively; thus he created room for the development of all-encompassing prejudices.

Third, by denying Jews individuality and viewing them as aliens, he perceived them as being a dangerous and destabilizing element in society.

Fourth, he reduced complex social issues to a black-and-white proposition with unyielding attitudes and an unwillingness to compromise. This tendency of Hitler's led H. R. Trevor-Roper to call him "the most formidable among the terrible simplifiers of history."⁴ In the Gemlich letter and

in his last will and testament can be detected the outline of the fateful flaws in Hitler's thinking.

The continuity and unchangeability of these expressions of hatred were obscured during Hitler's young adult years and during his stay in the army. They were at that time still private thoughts of no particular consequence, thoughts expressed only in the circle of equally frustrated and embattered war buddies, all busy digesting their memories of the horrors of trench warfare. Hitler reacted differently. Airing his wrath about the catastrophic outcome of the war did not reduce the intensity of his frustrations. The Gemlich letter signaled a new direction; and when Hitler discovered his talent as an orator, he began to acquire the tools to turn himself into an effective political agitator.

Hitler's nationalistic fervor was mobilized during the immediate postwar period by the activities of his political rivals with similar motivation. Many were radical, noisy, passionate, and ambitious reformers, revolutionary hot-heads, and even members of cultish cliques, often led by internationally minded Jewish liberals who felt inspired by the success of the Russian Revolution of 1917. They sought new models to be followed and to be implanted into Germany's postwar society. They meant to break radically with Germany's imperial past and created a turmoil resembling civil war conditions.

Six months prior to writing the Gemlich letter, on April 7, 1919, Hitler had witnessed the takeover of the Bavarian government by a small group of left-wing radicals in Munich, who proclaimed a Soviet Republic of Bavaria. Hitler saw the takeover as Jewish dictatorship. Within a month regular army troops and the Freikorps of General Franz Ritter von Epp reoccupied Munich, avenging the Communist massacre with a massacre of their own. 1919

Bavaria, in fact the whole country, was in a state of chaos. Among the agitators with Bolshevik leanings was Kurt Eisner, who had headed the Munich Council People's Republic. He was a local rabble-raising intellectual and a journalist and theater critic who flirted with leftist revolutionary ideas with enthusiastic exuberance. He proved to be more of a bearded prophet than an effective politician and had made an alarming spectacle of himself before he was murdered by nationalist extremists on February 21, 1919. He had generated as much support as bitter resentment for his separatist philosophy.

The same fate befell Rosa Luxemburg and Karl Liebknecht, who had been murdered four weeks earlier on January 15. And there was Matthias Erzberger, the former Reich minister of finance, who had been in charge of armistice negotiations and was regarded widely as the chief villain for having accepted and signed the infamous Treaty of Versailles. He was Jewish, like the others, and he too was murdered by right-wing fanatics on August 26, 1921. Frenzied nationalist avengers had been on the rampage 1921

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committing 354 political murders of this kind to stop the dominance of Jewish activists.

1920? Hitler had kept a watchful eye on despised, "un-German" activities and noted the increased violence against Jews. He joined ranks with these agitators and in one of his many hate-filled speeches, billed as a discussion of the Jewish Question, shouted in the Bürgerbräukeller: "Out with the Jews who poisoned our people!"⁶ He received a standing ovation.

Yet these postwar experiences in a Communist-inspired climate were not the origin of his hatred but the overt manifestation of a deeper lying psychological problem. The postwar turmoil in Munich only galvanized Hitler's decision to enter politics with an anti-Semitic platform; the roots of his hatred go back much further. In posing so readily as a self-styled expert on the Jewish Question and in the vehemence of his hatred he indicated that his ideas had been brooding for a long time.

Hitler himself ascribed the development of his anti-Semitism to the days in Vienna when he was a young adult, before the war had erupted. In *Mein Kampf* he explained that at first he had held only some "irrational"⁷ thoughts about Jews. But life in Vienna had opened up his eyes to new realities, among which the discovery of the Jewish presence was prominent. Vienna simply became a different town to him.

1913 His comments were personal, prejudicial observations, void of any philosophical reflection about human differences. They betrayed the shallowness and superficiality of his xenophobic bias, matched only by his ignorance of the complexities of the Jewish faith. He derided and outright ridiculed Jews for what he asserted was their claim to racial superiority whenever they referred to themselves as the "Chosen People." Hitler showed no recognition of the ancient traditions and the covenant of the Israelites with their God to be the recipient of His special care—and wrath as well—and did not comprehend the notion "Chosen People" as signifying the religious conception of the Jewish god's unceasing, protective intervention, which requires in turn total obligation and obedience to be deserving of such divine selection.

1913? Hitler's mind could conceive only of a racist definition of human relationships and was unable to see beyond the concrete meaning of the concept "Chosen People." He interpreted it to be a claim to privilege and entitlement to feel racially superior. In taking this position, he defined race relationships as a rivalrous duel over who in the end will be supreme. Only the subjugation of Jews would stop such a rivalry. A drastic solution was needed.

1913? At first Hitler tried persuasion and spoke of his young years when he engaged in wild debates with Jews to free them of their convictions and of "the madness of their ideas."⁸ He experienced utter frustration and said, "I talked until my tongue was tired, until my throat was hoarse."⁹ In due time, the failure to change their minds became a most personal issue. He felt ineffective and utterly rejected and "gradually began to hate them."

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he reported.¹⁰ This had to be changed, he felt sure, for Jews as a group were responsible for the decadence and cultural decline he detected all around him. "The fact was not to be denied that ninety percent of all literary and artistic rubbish and theatrical humbug was due to a race which hardly amounted to one-hundredth of all citizens in the country."¹¹ The press was also said to be in the hands of such decadent influence. "They all are Jews from the publishers downward,"¹² he asserted with anger.

The paranoid element was clearly reflected in his claim to have gained special "insight" into the true intentions of Jewish activities. He had begun to detect Jewish evilness behind press coverage, pornography, prostitution, and white-slave trade, certainly in politics. Hitler lamented, "As I learned to look for the Jew in every field of our cultural and artistic life, I suddenly bumped against him in a place where I least suspected him."¹³ His paranoid concerns grew to such alarming proportions that he suspected Fate to have blessed Jews with superiority over other peoples. He wondered if "unscrutable destiny, for reasons unknown to us poor mortals, inevitably decreed the final victory of this little race"; and he wondered also, "Had this race been promised the world as a reward?"¹⁴ What disturbed Hitler the most was his fear of a Jewish plot to destroy the German heritage. Whatever they were doing, he felt sure, was "obviously detrimental to German nationality."¹⁵

His suspicions drew wider and wider circles. Germany was but one immediate target of Jews; they posed a threat to the entire civilized world. He believed he had discovered that the "Jewish doctrine of Marxism"¹⁶ was being used to bring about the ultimate destruction of civilization and deprive humankind "of the preconditions of its existence and culture,"¹⁷ inevitably leading "to the end of all order conceivable to man!"¹⁸ With prophetic urgency he continued to make predictions, filled with ominous visions of his vengeful rage: "Should the Jew with the help of Marxist creed conquer the nations of the world, his crown will become the funeral wreath of humanity, and once again our planet, then empty of human beings, will float through the space of the universe as it did millions of years ago."¹⁹

Such a morbid image of Jews cannot be dismissed as the overdramatized expression of a hysterical mind spouting irrational ideas; it must instead be recognized as the core of a paranoid thought system in which persecutory fear mobilized hostile-sadistic impulses in a desperate effort to remove such threats. At first Hitler thought, "External nature would inexorably revenge such violations of its laws."²⁰ But then he felt he was given a mysterious mandate by Fate to be the avenger and healer, the rescuer and messiah, the agent of God Himself to counteract the Jewish dangers to humankind. He declared: "I believe today to act in behalf of the Almighty Creator. By warding off the Jew I am fighting for the Lord's work."²¹

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minates weeds, insects, and rodents. Here, the Pasteur-Koch complex was at work. Hitler's potential for radical, violent solutions and the idea of extermination had not been foreign to him even in his youth and were well rationalized conceptions. Being exposed for long years to the mentality of frontline soldiers to kill the enemy did not help. He carried into his critical adult years the impulse to destroy a hated enemy, after the war fully integrating it into his thinking about his political activities.

Hitler made no transition to the new reality of a postwar era of peace, for he believed he had finally discovered the true enemy behind all events in history: the Jew. He became convinced that since "the ruthless Jew is fighting for the domination over other nations,"²² sooner or later all nations will be confronted with this Jewish threat. In his missionary zeal he believed the task of settling this issue "by the sword"²³ had fallen upon the Germans. There was no room for any peaceful solution. "Only the combined, concentrated power of an upsurging, nationalistic passion can prevent the universal enslavement of nations. Such a process, however, will be and remain a bloody one,"²⁴ he said in ominous reference to what he actually did twenty years later when ordering the Holocaust.

The threat to employ a bloody solution proved to be a prophetic declaration. He had written it down at the age of thirty-four, at the outset of his career, and showed a fierceness of convictions in which violence had already penetrated his entire thinking.

In the writing of his book Hitler acquired a prolonged use of intemperate and polemic language. His vindictive, threatening bluster deteriorated readily into hostile invectives and vulgarities, so typical of his style of problem solving in political matters as well. Not only Jews were targeted for his anger; he threatened to "exterminate mercilessly the agitators who were misleading the nation,"²⁵ and any form of opposition to his will triggered retaliatory impulses. Those who opposed him were labeled criminals, deserving of the "most extreme and brutal method"²⁶ of punishment.

Researchers have attempted to trace to his childhood the origin of such a potential for irrational-destructive behavior, probing deep into his past. They relied on the Freudian assumption that the explanation for such adult behavior can be found only in traumatic experiences in early life. So pressing was the need for explanation of Hitler's behavior—any explanation, in fact—that all kinds of brazen hypotheses were advanced challenging both common sense and prudence. They came up with findings that have generated two myths that linger on and have assumed a significance far exceeding plausibility.

The first was the sensational revelation of the alleged existence of a mysterious Jewish grandfather, a story told many times with fascination and curiosity, as if indeed there was a skeleton in Hitler's family closet. No evidence has ever been forthcoming to support this speculation.

The second myth related to the illness and death of his mother. Psy-

minates weeds, insects, and rodents. Here, the Pasteur-Koch complex was at work. Hitler's potential for radical, violent solutions and the idea of extermination had not been foreign to him even in his youth and were well rationalized conceptions. Being exposed for long years to the mentality of frontline soldiers to kill the enemy did not help. He carried into his critical adult years the impulse to destroy a hated enemy, after the war fully integrating it into his thinking about his political activities.

Hitler made no transition to the new reality of a postwar era of peace, for he believed he had finally discovered the true enemy behind all events in history: the Jew. He became convinced that since "the ruthless Jew is fighting for the domination over other nations,"²² sooner or later all nations will be confronted with this Jewish threat. In his missionary zeal he believed the task of settling this issue "by the sword"²³ had fallen upon the Germans. There was no room for any peaceful solution. "Only the combined, concentrated power of an upsurging, nationalistic passion can prevent the universal enslavement of nations. Such a process, however, will be and remain a bloody one,"²⁴ he said in ominous reference to what he actually did twenty years later when ordering the Holocaust.

The threat to employ a bloody solution proved to be a prophetic declaration. He had written it down at the age of thirty-four, at the outset of his career, and showed a fierceness of convictions in which violence had already penetrated his entire thinking.

In the writing of his book Hitler acquired a prolonged use of intemperate and polemic language. His vindictive, threatening bluster deteriorated readily into hostile invectives and vulgarities, so typical of his style of problem solving in political matters as well. Not only Jews were targeted for his anger; he threatened to "exterminate mercilessly the agitators who were misleading the nation,"²⁵ and any form of opposition to his will triggered retaliatory impulses. Those who opposed him were labeled criminals, deserving of the "most extreme and brutal method"²⁶ of punishment.

Researchers have attempted to trace to his childhood the origin of such a potential for irrational-destructive behavior, probing deep into his past. They relied on the Freudian assumption that the explanation for such adult behavior can be found only in traumatic experiences in early life. So pressing was the need for explanation of Hitler's behavior—any explanation, in fact—that all kinds of brazen hypotheses were advanced challenging both common sense and prudence. They came up with findings that have generated two myths that linger on and have assumed a significance far exceeding plausibility.

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chohistorians have supported the thesis that there was a "close association between the onset of Hitler's fanatical hatred of Jews and the death of his mother."²⁷ No doubt the death of his mother was a most tragic event in the life of a struggling eighteen-year-old boy, but it is difficult to infer that the traumatic impact molded Hitler's entire personality and led to his murderous behavior later on. Mother Klara was allegedly poisoned, abused, and killed by the treating physician, Dr. Eduard Bloch, who happened to be Jewish. Rudolph Binion advocated the thesis that "his mother's illness looms behind the timeless tirades against the Jewish cancer, the Jewish poison."²⁸ But such reconstruction of Hitler's emotional dynamics must be accepted with caution as a remarkable explanatory device without foundation in fact.

Hitler had specifically declared that "the Jew must go,"²⁹ but he never stated that Dr. Bloch must go or that he was evil and therefore all Jews are evil. Hitler was capable of practicing blatantly overt personal vengeance and has clearly demonstrated this trait when using his power to destroy the object of his hatred in one way or another. If he had harbored any hatred of a personal nature toward Dr. Bloch, he would not have had any need to suppress it, especially after he had annexed Austria in 1938.

Hitler had no compunction about getting rid of any adversary, as he showed with Gustav von Kahr, Hitler's prosecutor in 1923, and Kurt von Schleicher, a politically active general. Kahr and Schleicher were brutally killed in connection with the Stalinesque purge of the opposition, along with other so-called undesirable elements during the Röhm affair on June 30, 1934.

Even personal friends had to die for any disloyalty. "Traitors" were brutally killed, not always shot. The generals who were involved in the conspiracy against Hitler in an attempt to assassinate him on July 20, 1944, were garroted with piano wires. The movie reels taken of their execution were watched by Hitler with sadistic satisfaction at his headquarters. Dr. Bloch would have been targeted for extreme punishment had Hitler indeed conceived of him as a Jew who had killed his mother. The disturbing notion that Jews posed a mortal danger to world civilization lay on a different, more abstract level. His obsessional ideas about Jews transcended concerns over the fate of any individual person, such as Dr. Bloch, and instead focused on his false beliefs that the activities of Jews as a race "must ultimately result in the collapse of human civilization and the consequent destruction of the world."³⁰

Viable hypotheses are difficult to advance to explain this set of thoughts. Something must have triggered Hitler's hatred. It is more plausible to assume that it was a regressive, vicious, innate tendency toward sadistic behavior rather than a reaction to an emotionally shattering experience in childhood.

Nothing happened in Hitler's early childhood resembling a serious traumatic episode that might have affected him substantially to lend weight to

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ventive ideologue aiming at offering a comprehensive thought system that could successfully rival Marxism and socialism, and even religious systems such as Christianity. There was no room for the world of Lanz von Liebenfels. Hitler saw himself as functioning on a much higher level, producing ideas so advanced that they cannot be fully comprehended by mere mortals. He thought his was the fate of a great mind who may have "to renounce the recognition of the present, but in return, provided his ideas are immortal, will harvest the fame of posterity."³⁴

The ideas of his society influenced Hitler greatly, but there were other influences. The roots of national socialism—so Germanic in its content and image—can also be traced to the work of three non-Germans: the Frenchman Count Arthur de Gobineau, and two Englishmen, Houston Stewart Chamberlain and Charles Darwin. Thus it was the ideas of the brilliant scientist Darwin and two unscientific, cultural philosophers, Gobineau and Chamberlain, that had been feeding the flames of racism. Their teachings had a potent effect on Hitler, by far exceeding anything Lanz von Liebenfels could have contributed.

Right after Hitler was born, Gobineau's ideas about the inequality of the human races began to penetrate the elitist thinking of the upper classes, which had a vested interest in securing their privileged positions at the time when a powerful working class became a major social force. Gobineau argued that Aryans are a superior white race, among whom the Germans were especially pure. These Aryans were said to be in danger of being contaminated by "inferior blood." Gobineau was convinced that the spread of democracy would only assure the ultimate decline of the role of the noble white person and bring a disastrous fate to the diluted superior races and thus contribute to the loss of true culture.

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In line with his inclination never to acknowledge the sources of his ideas, Hitler did not tell us what books he had read and at what point he had encountered Gobineau. But his national socialist ideology mirrored much of Gobineau's racist ideas. Gobineau should be truly credited with being one of the men who triggered visions in Hitler's mind more than anyone else.

Hitler was similarly receptive to Chamberlain, a believer in the redemptive power of the Aryan race who thought he had discovered in Hitler the savior of the Aryans under Germany's leadership. The two "pure races," the Germans and the Jews, were locked in a gigantic struggle, so Chamberlain asserted, in which the former represent the best and the most superior of human cultural heritage while the latter were destructive forces in human civilized affairs, bent on gaining world domination. Hitler literally adopted these views without modification, except for not sharing Chamberlain's religiously anchored anti-Semitism, advancing his own brand of racial anti-Semitism instead. Chamberlain's fanatic notions of racial struggle and decadence led him to discover the noble Teutons as civilization-saving forces.

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He longed for Germanic leadership to forestall the "bastardization" of nations. Hitler's sense of mission was fed by much of his pseudophilosophical world of ideas of the Germophile son-in-law of Richard Wagner. Hitler had literally taken over the leading ideas of Gobineau and Chamberlain, lock, stock, and barrel.

Hitler's need to align himself with the leading minds of his time led to his receptivity to the theory of Charles Darwin, whose scientific brilliance inadvertently provided a cornerstone in the overall framework of National Socialist thinking. Hitler's own convictions were based on Social Darwinist concepts in which the principle of survival of the fittest was broadened to assume that whatever governs animal behavior also governs human behavior. The strongest nation, therefore, will prove to be the fittest and achieve total dominance of the globe. In the last analysis, Hitler saw human life as an "eternal struggle"³⁵ over racial fitness carried out in a life-and-death duel between Germans and Jews.

In line with Chamberlain's views, Germans were said to be ordained by Fate to be the leader among nations. Hitler felt no moral qualms in exerting oppressive forces to achieve this goal, demanding the subjugation of weaker or "inferior" nations. Such thoughts had penetrated the mind of Hitler at a time when he was no more than a bright but confused young man in Vienna. He had entered a new exciting world when he came to the metropolis, which could just as well have turned him into an able, goal-directed, and committed student, had he been a well-functioning person. There are no reasons to speculate why he should not have been in a position to further his grandiose dreams about art and architecture had he not been afflicted by his obsessive ideas. Yet he lacked the proper inner direction and motivation, failing to be realistic and adaptive.

Vienna proved to be his undoing. It became a bewildering and overwhelming place to him, contributing to an unbearable plight experienced for six long years. It was a "painful scramble for existence,"³⁶ Hitler recalls to explain why he was unable to cope with the challenge of life in the big city. He began to rationalize his personal failure and looked for explanations, only to find them in the Jewish presence in Vienna and their dominance in cultural affairs, business practices, and professional life.

1941 He became infected by the fervor of the spirit of nationalism with all the accompanying tenacity of views related to the belief in racial superiority. The broader humanistic vistas escaped Hitler totally. His untutored mind made him fear that academic studies would only create "a terrible muddle of things learned"³⁷ He was suspicious of academic knowledge and remained unresponsive to any formal approach to studying. Always in the grip of his own idiosyncratic perceptions, he did not allow anything to touch his mind that possibly could expose the fallacy of his crude, fixed, and prejudiced convictions, which had gradually begun to shape up in response to

Hitler became particularly receptive to Richard Wagner, who provided him with many models of timeless Germanic heroes and their wonderful deeds. In Wagner's music dramas he found the affirmation of the Germanic character. Wagner had portrayed these Germanic types in battles to be fought, in insults to be avenged, and in honor to be protected, all representing eternal attributes of the forebears of contemporary Germans. The emphasis on strength, duty, loyalty, and resourcefulness shown in moments of adversity; the courage displayed in the face of an overwhelming number of enemies; the decisive influence of Fate—all were preeminent virtues preached to Germans during Hitler's reign.

Wagner
1907-
1908

The characters depicted in Germanic legends were entirely human, not half-human incarnations of gods. The virtues and vices of heroes were spectacular, though subject to an inexorable fate to which men as mortals have to submit. These heroes were expected to summon all their strength and their will to carry out the joyous mandate to do one's duty.

Richard Wagner can certainly be said to have contributed to Hitler's notion that the lives of Germans, collectively, were under the directing power of destiny that, try as they may, they cannot succeed in averting. In his writing and speeches, Hitler made constant references to the inevitability of Fate, which he felt was controlling even his personal life. "I was driven by an inner voice," he stated, and he took pride in acknowledging that

1919

~~"Fate itself became my teacher."~~⁴²

A picture emerges of a man prompted to act upon the supernatural direction of divine forces like a prophet of Biblical times, with Jews the only source of threat to the realization of his vision of Germany's destiny. This fear, a critical influence on Hitler, was nursed by one additional source: the *Protocols of the Elders of Zion*. Hitler was open in acknowledging his trust in the revelations of the *Protocols*. This document was allegedly a collection of secret notes taken from the proceedings of the First Zionist Congress held in Basel, Switzerland, in 1897. The minutes were allegedly smuggled out and printed in czarist Russia in 1905 by the Okhrana, the secret police of imperial Russia. They became an instant sensation in Europe.

The *Protocols* were said to be a valid account of the decisions and plans made at the Basel meeting in which the long-suspected international conspiracy of Jews to achieve world domination, one way or another, was exposed. Controversy soon arose over its genuineness, but it took many years before it was proven to be a hideous forgery and no more than an ugly piece of anti-Semitic propaganda produced by the Okhrana to provide justification for the bloody anti-Jewish pogroms in Russia.

Hitler never doubted the genuineness of the *Protocols*, all evidence to the contrary. The content fitted too well into his own theory about Jewish conspiratorial intentions and cemented his belief in the international collusion of all Jews. He argued that the best evidence for his assumption of genuineness can be found in the intense assertion by the "Jewish" Frank-

*furter Zeitung*⁴³ that they were a forgery. To him, he had found proof of the sinister intentions of Jews to plot the seizure of other nations. Once they had gained full control over the monetary and political institutions of leading countries, the overthrow of their government can be accomplished in due time. This blueprint for undermining a society outlined a scheme by which Jews were able to achieve indirectly what most other nations try to achieve directly through the use of military force, ruthless colonial expansion, and brash imperialistic self-assertion. Before it was accepted as a forgery, the *Protocols* had been translated into sixteen languages and succeeded in promoting worldwide anti-Semitism.

It is often said that Alfred Rosenberg had introduced Hitler to the *Protocols*. This lanky, grim-looking pseudo-intellectual spoke in the vein of Gobineau and Chamberlain. At age twenty-eight, he surfaced in Munich, where he found access to Hitler's inner circle. Rosenberg had fled from Russia, where he had studied in Moscow prior to the Bolshevik Revolution. He was of German extraction from the Baltic region and had become a virulent anti-Semite. Once in Munich, he made himself immediately part of the nationalistic cliques in Munich's society. He joined the Thule Society, which devoted itself to the ideas of a Germanic restoration. The society practiced strange rituals and upheld equally strange admission requirements. Hitler kept his distance from this group, even from Rosenberg, who eventually wrote his book *Foundation of the Twentieth Century* to demonstrate "Jewish evilness" and establish a link between communism and Judaism. He aimed at providing an ideological basis for nazism, but his Führer never warmed up to his ideas. Hitler was too pragmatic to find Rosenberg's overreaching abstractions of any use. In his inner circle he even ridiculed Rosenberg for his producing "home-spun Germanic myths" and called him a "weird apostle of the beyond."⁴⁴

Few biographers of Hitler paid much attention to Rosenberg's relationship to Hitler, except for Konrad Heiden, who was convinced Rosenberg had interpreted the *Protocols* to Hitler by stressing its contents as a true reflection of Jewish political philosophy. Heiden was sure that Hitler found in the *Protocols* all the support he needed to sustain his suspicions about the international objectives of Jewry.

In the jigsaw puzzle of Hitler's paranoid perceptions, the *Protocols* occupy a major place. His obsessions clustered around their content and lent direction and momentum to Hitler's thinking throughout his life. These obsessions became systematized and their ideas surfaced whenever he spoke of Jews. In this sense, the *Protocols* served as a major source of reinforcement of what had been brewing in his mind since his days in Vienna.

By the time Hitler went public with his ideas in the Gemlich letter, and subsequently in his fierce speeches and his polemic book, the paranoia had fully crystallized and kept burning in his mind with irresistible force until the very end. It was fifteen years after his first public speech before the

Damage
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OK

Loss of Reality

The scope of Hitler's madness became starkly visible in his drive to conquer other nations to become "the master of the world."¹ His vision failed to allow for the possibility of defeat or failure. Considering the overwhelming strength of the Allied forces during the Second World War, which outweighed Hitler's by a ratio of approximately fifteen to one, this moment had to come with inevitability of an explosion of a bomb rigged to a timed use. Did Hitler resist accepting this reality, or was he incapable of perceiving it? The answer tilts in the direction of the latter assumption.

An early indication of time running out on Hitler was a meeting at his headquarters in August 1942. On the surface, his war effort still favored his cause, but in the midst of his frenzied dash to Stalingrad, the key staff of Wehrmacht High Command began to fear that the expansive summer offensive, launched on June 28 and ordered by Hitler as a dual thrust toward Stalingrad and the Caucasus, would exhaust itself in its attempt to accomplish overambitious objectives.

Two days before the crack Sixth Army under the command of General Friedrich von Paulus reached the west bank of the Volga River, Hitler was embroiled in a nasty altercation with his chief of the army general staff, General Franz Halder, an experienced and bright professional soldier, appointed to his post in 1938. Halder had suggested that the limits of what the Wehrmacht could achieve could not be ignored any longer. In the ensuing heated exchange of views, while Hitler vigorously defended his decision to order a summer offensive of such great magnitude, Halder tried firmly to bolster his line of argument by pointing to the latest intelligence information that Soviet tank production had reached an overwhelming advantage with the manufacture of 1,200 tanks per month, whereas German

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1943

industry was able to deliver to its armed forces no more than 500 tanks; less than half.² Short-tempered and explosive Hitler, whenever hearing bad news, flew into a rage. He was unable to accept such alarming facts. Beside himself, he dismissed Halder's intelligence data as outright "idiotic nonsense." ~~He said in a fit of rage that the data was nonsense.~~

Hitler's massive denial of vital statistics and his failure to draw carefully reasoned conclusions from them revealed his flaw in responding to existing realities. Obviously, he had lived too long in a world of bluster, boast, and bombast to avoid falling back on self-delusion. No experience or knowledge could sober up intoxicating effects of his gaudy visions of world conquest. The paranoid dimensions of his thoughts, hardened and self-perpetuating, were reinforced in moments of national catastrophe by dreadful propaganda slogans such as "The more Germans suffer, the closer they are on their way to victory."³ This muddled talk mirrored his muddled thoughts.

Unable to reason things through, Hitler allowed his speculations about the further course of the war to take on visionary proportions. In due time this trend began to take on the specter of madness and became ever more visible to a growing number of members of the High Command, nursing dissenting sentiments that caused key officers to grow ambivalent about their allegiance to Hitler. Blowing hot and cold in their vacillation to join the resistance movement, they felt torn between their oath of loyalty to their Führer and their growing alarm about Hitler's unpredictable behavior. It took two more years, unfortunately, before a carefully planned attempt to kill Hitler was undertaken.

The episode at headquarters on August 21, 1942, at the height of Hitler's war effort was experienced by him as a supreme challenge to the sanity of his decisions. Halder did not survive such brazen effrontery in telling Hitler the truth. Within four weeks he was dismissed from his post, and on September 24 he was replaced with a more reliable and pliable yes-man, General Kurt Zeitzler, who was willing to conduct the war with more recklessness than the old members of the professional military establishment were willing to do. When some determined officers finally decided to assassinate Hitler on July 20, 1944, Halder was arrested immediately and sent to a concentration camp for the duration of the war.

Quite clearly, Hitler cared for nothing but the constructions in his own mind. No factual information caused him to alter his schemes or to rethink his original propositions. Whatever news threatened his visionary plans or contradicted his conception was dismissed as lies, angrily and violently, mainly out of a need to prove to himself that he was always in control of events. In critical moments of decision making, Hitler failed to cope with unexpected, newly arising political and military reverses that should have forced him to change his perceptions. Even in noncritical situations it seemed as if the experiences he had had during the course of his career as a leader of a highly developed nation did not modify his outlook nor help him rec-

ognize the outrageous, megalomaniacal, and irrational aspects of his ideology-bound reasoning.

In his study of Hitler, Colin Cross commented with the tactful but stinging thought, "In some sense he was mad, or at least the ideas of which he dreamt did not fit well into the real world."⁵ Indeed, Hitler's mind was lost in unreality by responding to the irresistible urge to forge his perceptions in accordance with the images he held in his mind. The "granite foundation" of his insights and knowledge, of which he told us with so much pride in *Mein Kampf*, were distillations of youthful fancy that prevented him throughout his mature years from interacting constructively with given reality as most people know it.

This mental idiosyncrasy can also be detected in the lead theme of his speeches in which his hatred of Jews invariably surfaced, unchanged and unmodified over the years, even though the intensity of his hatred at times seemed to recede into the background. With predictable regularity he would vent his hostile feelings toward them; and in projecting his own feelings onto the external world, he revealed the disturbed and grotesque features he attributed to Jews.

Even an individual with Hitler's unbending will power has limited reserves of energy and drive. The rigidity of his thinking would sooner or later prevent him from keeping abreast of events. His life's work, his brain child being his ideology, had kept him prisoner. The episode at headquarters in August 1942 illustrates the dramatic loss of his ability to accept crucial realities demanding innovative and intelligent response. The violence of his reaction when staring at reality-based facts was an indication of the slowly progressing disintegration of his ability to cope. His delusional thinking had become a substitute reality from which there was no escape. He did not will the Soviets to produce 1,200 tanks per month, and therefore they did not do so. Any assertion to the contrary was a vicious lie or, worse, a traitorous act. He was already captive of the shadowy world of insane reasoning.

And he willed that the war with Russia had to be won. Behind the compulsion to employ the most merciless methods to conduct his war lay the constantly simmering fear that losing it to a rival ideology, bolshevism, was equated in his mind with a triumphant victory of evil Jews over noble Aryans. He could not control Soviet tank production, but he could control the fate of Jews. By the time he had his fierce disagreement with Halder, the orders to construct extermination camps had already been issued. The mass murder of Jews was in full progress in the bizarre belief that somehow such atrocities might bring the war closer to a victorious end. Two months earlier, in June 1942, Treblinka had started its killing operations, and the first mass gassing had taken place at Auschwitz.

Hitler never gave any indications of being aware of the extent to which he had turned history back to an era in which the barriers created by racial

* A. H. They are crap. They fall apart, then I read down, their guns explode when they fire them.
* his secret weapon

prejudices and radical nationalism had reduced the development of human social life to fanaticism and violent confrontation, escalating ever more rapidly to radicalism and military brinksmanship. He was dictatorial by nature and never had wanted to be part of the world of statesmen, diplomats, and politicians. He was and remained an outsider to the practices of a national leadership relying on the structure provided by Western forms of government. He remained remote from reality, instead seeing himself as a leader with integrity who always acted in accordance with the demands of higher moral values.

Hitler's career reflects the tragedy of a sick man in a position of extraordinary responsibility with a mind reveling in long-range plans while blotting out any awareness of the possible short-lived consequences of his decisions. Paranoid constructions enabled him to block out his own brutality and uphold the self-image of the creative leader with a mandated mission. The pathological suspiciousness about the evil intentions of a Jew-dominated and non-German world prevented him from being able to gauge his personal role in precipitating the catastrophic turn of events of the Second World War and the Holocaust. He saw himself as a victim instead of the victimizer, someone whose crusading revolutionary, radical revisionism had removed him from the mainstream of Europe's evolving democratic traditions.

He had no understanding of how much his violent stand against the non-German world would mobilize defensive reactions in the minds of leaders of other nations anxious to protect themselves against a German onslaught. He was incapable of learning anything lying outside his fixed personal views, his ideology, which he kept advocating in all defiance of logic and the recognition of Germany's limited resources to make his own fantastic plans about world conquest a feasible proposition. His life became a fully personalized attempt at reworking history to suit his design, and he failed miserably in not seeing how little use the world had for his ideas—or worse, how much other nations lived in fear of his ideas and intentions.

The fusion of reality-anchored and wish-fulfilling perceptions is common enough in childhood before the door to the external world opens. During adolescence an accurate assessment of reality becomes a significant measure of achieving maturity. In Hitler's case, the door to outer realities stayed shut. His early fantasies of achieving glorious deeds in the fields of art and architecture slowly yielded to a pathological world view with its set of ideas frozen in unyielding obsessions.

His bizarre notions about race and Jews and Germans developed in a frantic attempt to bring order into his confused inner world. No amount of reading in his youth had been able to soothe his inner turmoil. He found peace only after he had volunteered for military service at the outbreak of the First World War, when he experienced the semblance of a structured life. He seemed outwardly calm and was inconspicuous during these four

long war years. Apart from acting on his fervent nationalistic feelings by immediately volunteering for service, he left no history of behaving as other than a dutiful soldier. His life became predictable in the climate of obedience and military order.

What he had left behind were years of teenage upheaval, rebellious attitudes, and constant struggle to grow beyond a would-be artist and intellectual dilettante. In tolerating the rigidity of army life and a dismal human existence during a brutal war, he displayed remarkable self-discipline, staying in control of his outer life and demonstrating that he was at least able to take hold of some aspects of reality.

The loss of the war in 1918 changed all that and threw Hitler back to the anxiety-provoking unpredictability of his prewar existence. He was right back to where he had been before the war. Once again the issue of controlling his life was before him, setting the tone for the perpetuation of his struggle to find his place in society. Politics became his choice. When he finally reached power as chancellor of the Weimar Republic on January 30, 1933, he aimed immediately at controlling all contingencies that might possibly threaten his security. He set up an autocratic government in which he could experience contentment by regulating, ordering, and controlling. He sought absolute assurance that he would never have to experience again the turmoil of his youth and made sure that nothing mattered more than his own ideas. Nothing was permitted to interfere with his wishes and dreams. He had made himself a dictator, finding natural fulfillment of his longing for total control by catapulting himself into the role of Führer of the German people and commander in chief of the army. Now he could dictate the direction of his own life, in fact dictate the conditions of life itself—not only his own but also that of everybody else. He made sure he would never be confronted again by the painful state of discontinuity known for too many years in his youth, years filled with frightening angst and lack of structure.

With absolute control, he meant to undo the outcome of the Great War and secure new living space for Germans, and to take care of the Jewish menace and establish Aryan superiority in the world. Another war was needed to accomplish such goals.

In good faith the German people cooperated but failed to see that their Führer's motivation was rooted in deep personal needs. The Second World War was an integral part of his long-range plans, but after he had started it, the nightmare of youthful instability began to recur as soon as the war effort collapsed after a glorious beginning. He was to experience again what he had dreaded the most and had fought against with all his might: loss of control. When the tide had turned in favor of the Allied forces, the chances of ever achieving his objectives dwindled rapidly. Growing aware of how much the powers he had created for himself had begun to vanish and with them the potential to sustain initiative in directing the events of his times,

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1918

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he lost any sense of definition of what realities he actually had to cope with. As the predictable course of the war unfolded, it became obvious how ignorant Hitler had been of the necessity to obtain first a broad industrial, logistical, and technical base to be able to conduct a modern war. He had failed to acquire the skills to function within the context of what politically and militarily was feasible and could not overcome his hate-oriented motivation in designing his plans.

Hitler lived with marked distortions in his perceptions of reality. In his broad picture of the world, he had an overly determined need to see England, the United States, and the Soviet Union in light of his own schemes. The serious misjudgment of his most formidable adversaries ultimately led to the gross mismanagement of Germany's war effort and sealed the fate of his war-locked nation. Hitler never understood England or English traditions or the moving forces in her history, such as the evolution of her democratic principles, the ideas of freedom, and the concept of loyal opposition—the latter being totally anathema to a man perceiving any opposition as treachery. He was fixated on seeing in England a Nordic brother-nation that had implemented successfully the Aryan destiny of world conquest by building a vast colonial empire. Hitler firmly believed England should have understood and accepted his vast ambitions of colonizing Eastern Europe and, in this sense, become an equal partner in the effort at world domination.

Neither did he grasp the nature of the special relationship England maintained with the United States, nor did he seriously care to know the United States. His ideas about this distant but mighty country did not change much after his exposure to the romanticized descriptions of the adventure writer Karl May, who filled Hitler's youthful mind with images of a cowboy-and-Indian tradition of an era long past. Yet the power of the United States had entered his life concretely with the massive tide turning intervention in the Great War in 1918. It is indeed puzzling why Hitler should not have developed then and there, as a frontline soldier, any sense of the dynamic evolution of a nation with a virtually unlimited industrial potential. To declare war on such a nation, as Hitler did on December 11, 1941, in the midst of his disastrous defeat before Moscow, was as senseless an act as it was self-defeating. Going to war with a new, powerful, and unknown enemy was a madness that attests to Hitler's reality-alien thinking.

Most critical for the outcome of the course of history was Hitler's misjudgment of Soviet political and military strength. Trapped by the ethnic framework of his thinking, he assumed Slavic people to be incapable of matching Germany's alleged military and human superiority. Failing to assess rationally a country he felt compelled to conquer, he underestimated the enormous power of the totalitarian system of the Soviet Union. Uninterested in her industrial relocation, he did not want to hear about the extent of mass production of superior Soviet weaponry, such as the T-34

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a personally insulting message, only then can one suspect the development of a serious paranoid disturbance.

The workings of a full-blown paranoid mind are best identified in the emergence, over time, of the production of strange ideas that are fixed and unyielding and dominate all reasoning and thinking. This is what had happened to Hitler. The strange ideas stirring his mind all pivoted around his fixed belief in the validity of his discovery of a Jewish world conspiracy aimed at foiling his own designs to achieve world dominance for Germany. His "them-against-me" outlook fed his suspicions about a secret plotting of the Jewish people for the purpose of defaming him. It was a most personal matter to Hitler. Jews had ridiculed him and laughed at him, he asserted, for his trying to become the leader of the German nation. Nothing offended him more than not being taken seriously. This brazen insult inflamed his morbid hatred and caused him to brood over how he possibly could avenge such outrageous derision.

The personal aspect of his delusional system surfaced in all its ominous meaning eight months before he launched his war of conquest. In his speech before the Reichstag on January 30, 1939,¹ he angrily castigated the Jewish people and vowed to pay them back. On the occasion of the annual celebration of the Nazi assumption of power in 1933 he did not fail to lambaste Jews by fixing blame in his customary raging fashion, holding them responsible for the defeat of the German army in 1918. Chiding them for having ushered in an era of misfortunes and unacceptable national humiliation, he spoke with urgency of the need of Germans to brace themselves for the dangers posed by Jews to the existence of their nation, and he exhorted them to remove all humanistic and sentimental considerations when contemplating a solution to the Jewish Question. He promised to do his part as their leader in fulfilling his pledge to remove all Jews. Then, he made his often-quoted prophecy:

Europe will never be able to experience calm, unless the Jewish Question is cleared up. . . . I have often been prophetic in my life and was laughed at. In my struggle to gain political power, Jews primarily accepted with ridicule my prophecy I would one day assume the leadership of the German state . . . and then, among other things, would bring to a conclusion the Jewish Problem. I believe that their noisy laughter in the meantime had been silenced. Today, I will be a prophet once again: Should the international financial circles of Jews outside Europe succeed once again to involve the nation in another war, the result will not be a Bolshevistic triumph and a victory of Judaism but the extermination of the Jewish race in Europe.²

He had demanded the removal of Jews from society at various times and in various degrees of intensity, first in his earliest political statement, his Gemlich letter in 1919. But what was new this time was the concrete nature of his intimidating threat to kill his tormentors. His paranoia had progressed to assuming systematic forms.

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1927
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In response to his threat he expected Jews to act in unison and comply with his demand for stopping to plot against Germany or face annihilation. In speaking so bluntly about the destruction of the Jewish race—"die Vernichtung der jüdischen Rasse"³—he uttered thoughts in which the terror of Auschwitz can be detected. He revealed the core element of a plan that was to become a gruesome reality only three more years in the future. The notion of killing a sworn enemy was an integral link in the chain of his paranoid orientation and developed in full disregard of its horrifying implications. His thinking in this vein made the Holocaust possible.

Hitler had always talked about Jews with a sense of revulsion, but also with fear, as if he were living in a world controlled by alien forces. His suspicions about the international scope of conspiratorial Jews eventually overwhelmed him. He had found them evil and full of malice, and in his mind they became evil and full of malice. He suspected they were doing exactly what all powerful nations aim at doing: realizing imperial ambitions. The situation demanded constant vigilance.

The delusion of persecution was reinforced for many years by his detection of "evidence" confirming his lingering suspicion about Jewish intentions. They were soon to play a central part in a larger matrix of his complex inner world with his flights into adventuresome fantasies and the intoxicating scope of a compulsion to make history.

In Hitler's thinking all Jews were alike, bound to each other racially, not by religious beliefs. Convinced they thought and acted in collusion all over the world, he failed to overcome his stubborn conviction that Jews are subversive people with treacherous disloyalty toward the government of any country in which they reside. By viewing them as parasites he removed all doubt from his mind about their taking an abject pleasure in undermining the existing order of any nation for the sole purpose of advancing their own ambitions and selfish interests.

His brand of anti-Semitism was an expression of a deep personal belief, which penetrated his entire outlook on life and was not tempered by any desire to take a rational, politically expedient position. His hatred had grown beyond the reach of objective thought. Jews had become a personalized, abstract image in his mind, which was detached from any pressure to experience compassion or sympathy or any regret for their fate. The decision to initiate a Final Solution by launching the Holocaust was not the result of any long inner debate. Nor was it modified by any feelings of guilt. It was the grisly realization of Hitler's perpetual compulsion to accomplish his plan for the removal of Jews. Not even the large number of murdered victims would stir his conscience.

In his mind Hitler had stripped Jews of all individuality. Denying them a human soul, he saw them as stereotypes standing for all that had gone wrong in Germany and for all the social ills of the world. Once Jews had become a constant source of irritation to him, Hitler was gripped by an

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1925

1924

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any thought to what would happen politically should such ambitions bring about an armed confrontation. In the last analysis, the games nations played proceeded under the rule "Dominate or vanquish."

Hitler adopted this mentality enthusiastically. He fully identified with the age of ideologies, which generated hopes, fears, and hatred. It was also an age of theories that attempted to explain the meaning of human existence. There was socialism, Marxism, and later on communism and fascism, but also Darwinism, all with their explicit claims and messages of exclusiveness, shattering old beliefs and convictions.

Among the many scientific discoveries, Hitler felt particularly attracted to Darwin's evolutionary theory, which raised so many vistas of a world in need of drastic revisions. Man's relationship to nature itself was seen in a different light, and young Hitler took the notion of the survival of the fittest very literally, believing to have detected a fundamental tenet governing all human affairs. He gave Darwin an unusually quick and sympathetic look and had no doubts that he had discovered the man who understood the crucial laws of nature better than anybody else.

All these ideologies kept Hitler busy. They commanded his interest and kept him spellbound. When he began to feel prompted to follow his own calling to be the leader of the Germans, he set out to formulate a *Weltanschauung* of his own by bringing his idiosyncratic outlook into harmony with all the ideas of intellectuals whose discourse about the nature of human nature he had followed, even though they were totally remote from Hitler's own serious, though amateurish, groping for insight. In latching on to the ideological passions of his time and scraping together his own theory, his national socialism, he meant to cover the tumultuous state of affairs in his mind. The logic and dimensions of his thoughts obeyed a law of their own, and the visions of what the world ought to be removed him far from recognizing how much he had been affected by the complex and volatile intellectual climate in Europe. In shaping his ideology he believed his thoughts were original and prophetic, by far transcending the validity of other ideologies. Yet he failed to see how much they also transcended the boundaries of normal thought.

1910 The moment came when these ideas fused with Hitler's paranoid preoccupation with Jews. When he entered public life after the end of the First World War, his pathology erupted with a loud and vulgar bang. Half his life was spent already, but the intensity of his personal reaction to the signs of national disintegration had led to a rediscovery of his deeply felt hatred of Jews. The transformation of Hitler from a private to a public person took place suddenly, and his paranoid core disturbance became the primary dynamic force within his mind. He felt compelled to settle once and for all the question of who was entitled to master the globe. The possibility of a Jewish victory became a nightmarish obsession because it "could be the end of all human existence and order."⁴

1924

The Dormancy Stage

1887
CK

93

scientious and devoted mother. But before Adolf was born, the family was decimated. Gustav died of diphtheria in December 1887, when he was but two-and-a-half years old. His younger sister, Ida, age one-and-a-half, died four weeks later of the same illness. Otto, who was born two months before Gustav died, lived for only a short time after his delivery. When Adolf arrived two years later, the only living child was Edmund, who had been born in 1884. But when Adolf turned eleven, Edmund died of measles, making Adolf the only living son, and Paula who had been born in 1886, Adolf's only remaining sibling.

ERR
OR

Searching through this early phase of Hitler's life for clues to locate the roots of his later peculiar mode of thinking is a frustrating exercise, for hardly anything is known about what he actually experienced. Nonetheless, the answers to Hitler's personality were believed to be buried in this early phase, as if no other period in his life had mattered.

Hitler himself had very little to say about the first three-and-a-half years of his life, when he lived in Braunau am Inn, the place of his birth. He dismissed this time as unimportant, adding with an apologetic twist, "Only little is retained in my memory of this period."² But he did not want to remember very much about the many subsequent years either. In *Mein Kampf* the entire childhood and adolescent years were covered on seventeen short pages.

In his autobiographical account, beyond making some perfunctory statements on his background, Hitler was obviously anxious to move quickly to what was pressing on his mind: outlining his program for changing society and bringing a new order to Europe, speaking of discovering his mission in history, offering a justification for the conquest of Eastern European territories, and reminding Germans to remove Jews from human society.

In devoting only seventeen pages to the story of his early life, Hitler had no intentions of dwelling on anything of importance nor can it be said that he suppressed his memories and therefore failed to put down any profound account on the nature of critical childhood experiences.

As a credible summary of his childhood years, these first seventeen pages are of little value. He was already thirty-five years old when he looked back to give readers this select material on his personal life, but he obviously did so for no other reason than to foster his own budding political career by creating images of himself that would impress the public. With dramatic effectiveness he aimed at drawing the outlines of a contrived portrait of himself by giving the message of his own uniqueness and doing so by setting forth seven major points.

First, Germans should see him as independent of any outside influences, a self-contained individual who did not owe anybody anything. He conveyed to the reader at the very outset of his book the idea that he was a law unto his own. He claimed as a boy to have triumphed bravely over the

1924
Mein
Kampf

1924 Mein Kampf
Hitler & Hess

powerful authority of his teachers and his abstruse father, who he said failed in breaking his will. Hitler's message was clear: His will power was supreme and whatever he planned would prevail.

Second, asserting that a true leader is born with innate political talents, he pointed to his own gift of leadership. Already on page 3 he claimed his peers had accepted him as one of their "young ringleaders."³ The implicit message was given that he was a born leader of historical dimensions.

Third, he stressed eloquently to have been blessed with irresistible persuasiveness. "I believe that my oratory talents were trained through more or less stirring debates with my peers,"⁴ he asserted, as if he had spent a lifetime preparing himself for his later career. His message: He possessed one of the great assets any leader must have: oratory.

Fourth, he wanted people to know that he was a confirmed and ardent patriot already at age eleven. He projected the image of having been a very committed boy who "in a short time had turned into a fanatical nationalist."⁵ He made clear at the outset that he was fully identified with the German cause.

Fifth, he further asserted that in his childhood he had "learned to understand and grasp the meaning of history."⁶ He meant to create the myth of being endowed with extraordinary insights into the purpose and direction of the historical process. Emphasizing his own precocity and intuition, he appealed to the German people to trust his judgment blindly.

Sixth, along with stressing his roles as a child nationalist and a seer of historical proportions, he wanted to establish himself also as a "political revolutionary."⁷ He told his readers that he had "participated in relatively young years in the struggle of national majorities in Austria,"⁸ and he meant to create the image of a fighter destined to shape society.

Lastly, he fervently stated his commitment to war and militarism. His boyish enthusiasm had been kindled by reading a publication of the Franco-Prussian War of 1870-71. The story of "Germany's heroic struggle was to become the most important experience. So I began to admire more and more everything that was in any way connected with war or, for that matter, with military life."⁹ He stated and proclaimed what became a disastrous belief in war as an invigorating, heroic, and ennobling experience in human life.

Such self-revelations patently served propaganda purposes. It will be impossible to know what views Hitler truly held during his childhood years and what experiences had led him to form these views. More took place during these early years than his grandiose dreams of being a gifted orator who loved history and war. The only conclusions one may reach upon examining Hitler's account is that, sadly, hardly anything can be learned from Hitler's own statements to shed light on the mysteries of his preschool and school years to obtain a reliable base for an interpretation of his personality.

Hitler carefully avoided going beyond a tendentious summary. Meaning

second attempt to force the issue of admissions met with equally disastrous results. The sample drawings he had submitted were judged to be of such inferior quality that he was not even permitted to take the written examination.²³

1905 The disappointment about his repeated failure was more than Hitler could absorb. He felt so devastated that he did not want to face his roommate any longer. He abruptly moved out of their room on the Stumpergasse when Kubizek was away for eight weeks of military training. When Gustl returned to his room on November 20, his friend was gone. Hitler had literally disappeared without leaving any trace.

1909 After this event followed a mysterious episode lasting about sixteen months in which Hitler restlessly moved about, changed his residence, and did nothing to find a new direction. Hardly anything is known about his activities or his thoughts during this time. This period signaled Hitler's strange transformation from student of art to student of social political issues. Indeed, it was this stressful time that turned the entire experience of Hitler's Vienna years into "five years of hardship and misery."²⁴

1910 Hitler found himself in total isolation with no one to share or satisfy his craving for recognition and success. The old trauma of school failure had been reactivated, now showing as a definite pattern of consistent failure. He was reminded of the ever-present threat of defeat no matter what he tried. His frantic efforts to will a great personal success had turned into a frightening nightmare. Eventually Hitler surfaced in a night shelter for homeless people before he took up residence in a modern men's hostel, the Männerheim, on the Meldemannstrasse on February 9, 1910.

After Hitler had reached bottom and lodged at the night shelter for the homeless in the blue-collar suburb of Meidling, an accidental encounter was to prove a remarkable salvation for the moment. He met a drifting, unemployed graphic artist, Reinhold Hanisch, who persuaded Hitler to start some kind of business producing and selling watercolors and small-sized paintings of well-known Viennese buildings and landmarks—Hitler doing the painting and Hanisch the selling. It became a reasonably promising collaboration, and the two young entrepreneurs improved their living conditions by moving into the Männerheim.

In their new quarters Hitler was to experience a reasonable amount of financial stability, living rather comfortably among 500-odd people, among them transient jobbers and unskilled and skilled unemployed men. From low-level white-collar workers to lonely retired men and forlorn academicians, he met a motley group of people from the troubled sector of the cosmopolitan population of Vienna.

What happened in this atmosphere can best be described as the beginning of intellectual stirrings beyond those prompted by Wagnerian operas. Hitler allowed a whole new set of diverse experiences to influence him, experiences that provided a backdrop against which his peculiar, paranoid thinking was to emerge.

It can be surmised that during his year of roaming and rummaging, meandering through the ranks of low-class people, Hitler gave thought to the lives of the homeless, the wretched, and the disadvantaged. He felt he was one of them. He also followed the daily papers closely and was an avid reader of all kinds of pamphlets, magazines, and library books; but in all this he did not let his intellectual activity develop into any serious interest in academic preparation to qualify at some future date for admission to the School of Architecture. He remained an undisciplined, utterly self-reliant, random reader, a self-taught dabbler in all kinds of pseudo-intellectual matters.

Despite his widening interest in social and political issues Hitler had not altogether given up his ambition to be an architect, even though he should have been familiar enough with the entrance requirements to know that he would have to make a firm commitment to study in preparation for admission. He asserted that he always knew he would be an architect some day,²⁵ but he blamed the advent of the Great War for spoiling his plans. Later on in his life he even boasted, "In all probability, I would have become one of the best, if not Germany's foremost architect,"²⁶ and in *Mein Kampf* he spoke of having been "firmly convinced to make a name for myself some day as a master-builder."²⁷

The nature of his boastful self-aggrandizement was such that he made bold assertions but gave no indications of becoming a serious student of anything, acknowledging indirectly that he was unsuited for any academic career. An architect? A master-builder? He was unwilling to direct his motivation to that end. As a perpetual dilettante he had never acquired the effective study habits required to engage in precision learning and become successful in higher education. He fortified himself with an irrational belief in the omnipotence of will power, which would enable him to accomplish the glorious achievements of his self-indulging visions. He was truly convinced that "obstacles exist to be conquered, and not to be given in to."²⁸

It was quite apparent from looking at his Vienna years that Hitler had still not mastered the basic task of making a clear differentiation between facts and fantasies by excluding the noncontributory, fanciful image in his mind—his wish to be a renowned person. He stayed fixated in the stage of childhood in which anything can be accomplished readily and richly.

Hitler's activities in the Männerheim, painting postcards and watercolors for Hanisch to peddle, cannot be called a promising career; nor did Hitler claim to have been at the threshold of great success. His business arrangement with Hanisch had no impact on the direction of his intellectual development; it was no more than a practical method of making a meager living. His modest talent enabled Hitler to exist with the help of his shrewd companion. His heart was actually somewhere else.

It may not be possible to establish any relationship between Hitler's interest in artistic imagery and his quickly emerging fascination with the social, political, and racial currents of his time, except for speculating that the

hopelessness of his miserable personal life sharply raised his awareness of the misery of many other marginal, suffering, and impoverished people whom he felt were deserving of a better lot. He said, "Once my interest in social questions was aroused, I began to study them with all thoroughness. An entire new and to me unknown world was opening up."²⁹

This was a newly acquired orientation. Before moving to Vienna, Hitler had encountered little social and cultural diversity. Linz was a sleepy, provincial town, which Hitler had been so eager to transform into an architectural jewel of bourgeois magnificence. When he came to Vienna, he felt overstimulated at the outset by the "dazzling riches and appalling poverty existing in sharp contrast next to each other."³⁰ Living among the emotionally and materially deprived, he felt "drawn into the sphere of suffering."³¹ These people were like him, and he identified with them and their depressed moods about the lack of any promise in their future. Hitler had entered his twenties and could do no better than to eke out a modest living with the narrow-gauged, small-time existence of a painter of architectural themes.

Hitler now began to wrestle with the many personal observations he made of life around him. It was so typical for Hitler to do all this without resorting to any intimate human contact—not one older person to be his mentor to coach him about the subtleties of life. His early relationship with Kubizek had run its course and was never resumed. Hanisch could not possibly serve as a replacement; for one, Hitler did not trust him and felt exploited by Hanisch's clever practice of selling his postcards. Hitler allowed no one to help him sort out the many confusing impressions he gained from his life in Vienna.

Nor were women important to him. Hitler was totally disinterested in seeking their companionship. Living in the Männerheim made it easy for him to avoid taking this significant maturational step in a young man's life. Women were simply not permitted to enter, so that Hitler did not have to face the prospect of relating to the opposite sex. Apart from a teenage crush on a girl in Linz named Stephanie, of whom Kubizek told us,³² Hitler seemed unable to maintain a close friendship with a girl. He was not able to go beyond casting admiring glances at girls, as he did with Stephanie. The Männerheim was therefore ideal for his asexual existence, for there he did not have to struggle with his self-imposed abstinence.

Lack of contact with women was to cripple Hitler emotionally, however. Throughout his life he avoided finding personal growth through interpersonal relationships, including the trials and tribulations of a stormy (or calm) affair with a woman. The pleasant, mousey, and simple Eva Braun, who entered his life when he was already forty-three years old, was no exception. He may have had sexual contact with her, but it is certain that during his young adult years in Vienna, Hitler had no romantic attachments. Thus he never experienced the surprises and acute personal conflicts such entan-

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respective group—as were the Jewish people. For the dual monarchy had no national identity of its own; it was “Austria” in name only. Hitler was thoroughly disgusted by such ethnic diversity. To him Austria was a hodgepodge of people who diluted the Germanic historic roots of his country. 1910
Failing to withhold his resentment, Hitler vented his feelings; “I was repelled by this whole mixture of Czechs, Poles, Hungarians, Ruthenians, Serbs, and Croates, and everywhere the perennial bacteria poisoning humanity . . . Jews and more Jews.”³⁹ Hitler was simply unable to tolerate the Jewish presence or their competence, and he feared their talent and intelligence. He noted with great alarm, “Wherever I look I saw only Jews.”⁴⁰

Such feelings went beyond the common biases or concerns at the root of ordinary prejudices. Hitler's expression of marked uneasiness and vigilance sprung from his agitated response to the barrage of anti-Semitic publications. He took it all at face value, and he became obsessed, slipping into the realm of disturbed paranoid thinking. At this point, however, his ideas remained a private matter and did not make him dysfunctional. Nor did he come close to the edge of blatant paranoia, although his suspiciousness about the purpose behind all Jewish activity had taken on alarming proportions so that the outline of his conspiratorial delusions could be seen.

It was most tragic for the long-range future of many innocent people that he felt so sure about the validity of his views about Jews and their alleged worldwide conspiracy to undermine society. “This race has always formed a state within the state. It is one of the most ingenious tricks that was ever devised to make this nation sail under the flag of ‘religion,’ thus assuring it of the tolerance which the Aryan is always ready to accord to religious creeds.”⁴¹ he declared. Such malicious practices amounted to an attempt at the “Jewification of our spiritual life.”⁴²

The notion of an international connection among Jewish communities spanning continents was in all probability reinforced by his encounter with the *Protocols of the Elders of Zion*, which came to light during these years after the turn of the century. The pernicious forgery reverberated throughout the world among the many who chose to believe in the notion of a Jewish world conspiracy. Hitler felt sure that Jews were coming at him from all directions: “In the North and South the poison of alien people gnawed at the body of our nationality, and even Vienna was visibly becoming more and more a non-German city,”⁴³ he said fully believing that they aimed at the destruction of the German heritage in the Western world. He felt equally sure that the so-called Jewish press was “so obviously hostile towards everything German that this could only have been intentional.”⁴⁴

For Hitler, the Jewish threat held a deeper, personal meaning. He made Jews responsible for all kinds of social ills, such as prostitution and the white-slave trade.⁴⁵ The intensity of his self-righteous indignation, blending with moralistic and puritanical aestheticism, reached a point where he no longer maintained any doubts about the existence of a sinister Jewish

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plot causing all underlying social problems. "I'd finally had it, and I became enraged," he shouted. "I could no longer bypass the clarification of the Jewish Question. I felt compelled to look into it."⁴⁶

Hitler's obsession with Jews, now completed, took on a clinical dimension. It turned him into a vigilante, pondering constantly about how to counteract the mortal dangers they posed to society. He made no effort to probe honestly into the origin of his anti-Semitic hatefulness. His mind was made up. After all, even his great hero, Richard Wagner, had revealed in his writings and letters an entrenched intellectual anti-Semitic attitude. In the projection of his own hatred can be detected the nucleus of Hitler's paranoid condition.

As an ardent nationalist, Hitler was also very receptive to the ideas of the pan-German movement with its emphasis on purity of the German language and its preoccupation with old Germanic mythology and *völkisch* ideology, but he meant to be more than a rabid pan-German fanatic. He found his calling in adopting the identity of a "fanatic anti-Semite,"⁴⁷ which allowed him to express his hostility and vindictiveness toward a specific target much better than joining a movement without a specific program of action.

1912
Living in the culturally diverse climate of Austria, Hitler reacted with alarm to the stirring social turmoil. His fascination for seeking change through social reform in an age of burgeoning industrialization, with its growing urban poor, led him to take a close look at socialism and democratic forms of government. To his great dismay he discovered once again the predominant role of Jewish intellectuals, particularly in the Social Democratic party, which he was convinced was using Marxism cunningly as an instrument to bring about Jewish world dominance.

Hitler could not get away from the omnipresence of Jews and started fierce arguments with his companions at the Mannerheim in an effort to persuade them to see his point: Anti-Semitism offers all the answers to the problems of life. He was received with indifference. His violent denunciations of socialism and Marxism, at a time when he was only twenty years of age, were Hitler's early attempts at converting people to his point of view. But he could not do much better than engaging in wild debates in which he was locked into a central theme: racism in the form of anti-Semitism. His outlook had not fully jelled, and his views were still crude and carried no punch; yet the major ingredients of his hateful mind were already all present, waiting only to be reinforced, as they were, by his war experiences to come and by his encounter with reactionary elements at the outset of his new career after the war was over.

Needing to confirm his views and arm himself with factual information, Hitler began to read indiscriminately. No doubt he expanded his horizon considerably, aided by his phenomenal memory; but his reading was random and mistaken by him for serious study.⁴⁸ He was curious and meant

to know what writers and thinkers had to say about the social issues preoccupying him, but his untutored mind was responsive only to what supported his own position.

Convinced he was scientific and objective in his search for absolute answers, Hitler accepted racism as a legitimate field of study. He considered it not to be entirely a personal indulgence or a cultish hobby, and he identified with the academic pursuits of social scientists such as Count Arthur de Gobineau, who studied differences among human races. Many scientists and cultural philosophers were engaged at that time in a serious endeavor to discover human and social differences among groups of people. Hitler adopted from among their views what suited him, being truly convinced he was a studious young man without realizing that he sought only justification for his personal beliefs.

The driving forces behind such a frenetic search for clarity led him to study most thoroughly Karl Marx's *Das Kapital*. His eyes were opened up, he tells us. "For the first time I reached an understanding . . . of the intent of social democracy to ruin the national economy and to prepare the ground for the domination of truly international finance."⁴⁹ Marxist theory was but a "weapon of decomposition," he said. "Thus, a worker's movement is created under Jewish leadership to aim in all appearance at improving the condition of the worker but in reality intends no less than achieving the enslavement and extermination of all non-Jewish people."⁵⁰ 1912
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With such paranoid thoughts, Hitler increased his self-imposed stress, as if his hateful feeling could possibly help him develop a career and straighten out his personal life. The views of racial pamphleteers with their anti-Semitic polemics had mired him in popular myths and social misconceptions about Jews. Without showing any critical assessment of such sources of "knowledge," Hitler actually joined the virulent racists of his time, whose miserable message had been blind to the humanistic and liberal voices also to be heard in Vienna, among the more enlightened people.

At the end of May 1913 Hitler decided he had had enough of Vienna and admitted to himself that he was going nowhere. His superficial relationship to Hanisch had deteriorated, ending up in a legal battle over fraud, Hanisch having cheated him on the commissions earned for Hitler. Hitler decided to relocate to Munich to end these years of misery, turmoil, and failure. In all probability he meant to get out of Vienna for another good reason: to escape from having to serve in the army of a country he thoroughly despised. 1913

It was a time of looming war. A military confrontation of European superpowers seemed inevitable. For more than a decade Hitler had watched the big nations rival each other for dominance over their neighbors. It was a deadly play of mutual political and military intimidation, the practice of the *Grosse Politik*, as it was called by the starch-collared, black-suited, top-hatted diplomats who loyally served their plumed rulers in their bemedaled

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and colorful uniforms. Hitler anticipated the Great War and did not want to be part of Austria's racially mixed army. For years he had admired Germany's strong position among the nations, its growing military strength, and the promise of its becoming one of the most powerful nations in Europe. He wanted to make himself part of it and so moved to Munich.

Of critical importance was that Vienna had become associated in Hitler's mind with a trail of personal failure. He carried with him to Munich the memories of his confusions, haunted as he was by the repercussions of being unable to launch any kind of career. For years he had made himself part of a group of losers and downtrodden people who like himself had nowhere to go. A considerably more peaceful time was waiting for him in Munich. He still had no promising chances to be an artist and not a single person to call a friend, yet he described the next year and a half as "the happiest and by far the most contented in my life."⁵¹

He was to say something similar about the war that followed. After World War I had taken its course, he looked back on his five years in the army and called them "the greatest and most unforgettable times of my earthly existence."⁵²

Although the Vienna years had left their impact on his personality, what was to follow obviously affected him just as much, perhaps even more so, for the war conditioned him to accept violent solutions as an acceptable practice. He came to believe that killing and death were cruel but essential elements of life itself.

When war came he was euphoric, immediately volunteering to join the life of the field-gray soldiers in the German Imperial Army. His drab existence in Munich had come to an end, and the promise of finding glory and recognition as a soldier lifted his spirits. He served dutifully and quietly, not making himself visible in any way, without voicing in the public arena his paranoid notions about Jews, Marxism, and the need to change society. He was known to have been difficult with his companions at the *Männerheim*, fiercely arguing his case against Jews, but he had never joined a protest march or mounted the barricades in the tradition of the revolutionary spirit. In the army, little was known about his past tendency to harangue people, and he remained inconspicuous, never raising his voice. Thus he gave no indication that anything extraordinary was going to happen in his life.

1914-15
He joined his outfit in Munich on August 16, 1914, and stayed in uniform until March 31, 1920, long after the ravages of the Great War had ceased—one and a half years later. He was fortunate to have survived in the first place, having fought in battles from the very beginning of the war until the last days of combat at the western front. He was twice wounded and often decorated. His survival under such adverse conditions was experienced by him as a miracle, especially reserved for him by Fate itself. He later saw a propaganda value in this fact and posed in his career as the

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typical "unknown soldier" who represented the survivor of two million German war dead.

When Hitler became a soldier, he was but one of thousands of similarly enthusiastic volunteers eager to grab a rifle and go out to shoot the enemy. His paranoid condition remained in a latent state until the end of the Great War, when the stresses finally became intolerable and he reached a point where his paranoia erupted in an orgy of hatred, vindictiveness, and retaliatory impulses. It is well understood how much such symptoms develop in response to environmental and interpersonal stresses, the kind Hitler was experiencing by the time the war ended in 1918.⁵³

At the outset, in 1914, Hitler reported for military service in the midst of a national euphoria over the outbreak of hostilities. Psychologically he was still a loner, a political nonentity with a long history of being a cranky, would-be artist unnoticed much by anyone but his few companions at the Männerheim in Vienna. His paranoia remained hidden behind the facade of his brooding behavior and socially awkward manner. He was lost, friendless, and without a sense of purpose, and he remained so for the duration of his five years in the German army. He had made himself part of a global struggle in which millions of men died for no other reason than the noble spirit of doing one's duty.

At the time he joined the army, Hitler had reached an inner state in which he needed to change his life. The war gave him a chance to do something different, but the most that can be said of this twenty-four-year-old facing the guns of August was that he was a child of his time. He remained burdened by all kinds of opinions and prejudices. As yet the vagueness of his thinking had hardly given way to the power of more abstract thought. He was still in the process of formulating a final outlook; his proverbial "granite foundation" was not to be achieved until many years later. Throughout the war Hitler was a grim-looking man with a restless spirit and a general awareness of the currents of his age, a man waiting for the war to end in a German victory.

Given what happened in the formation of Hitler's personality as a consequence of years of fighting as a frontline soldier, his silence during these years is most astonishing. Hardly anything concrete is known about his war years: how he related to other soldiers, why he failed to be promoted to the rank of an officer and become a leader of men—considering that he had boasted to have been born to be one—and how he actually felt about Germany's war aims. What were his thoughts beyond his commitment as a soldier to do his duty? He did not tell us. Only a dozen postcards have survived from these years—postcards and a handful of letters. Their content tells us nothing about Hitler as a person, and we are left with much speculation about how his euphoric mood at the outbreak of the war was tempered by the experiences that followed.

In spite of Eberhard Jäckel and Axel Kuhn's diligent efforts to compile

1916

a complete record of all of Hitler's writing and speeches between the years 1904 and 1924, nothing more than thirty-four documents from the entire war years has surfaced. Of these nearly half, sixteen of them, proved to be forgeries, among them nine poems.⁵⁴ Of the eighteen genuine entries, little is left to permit a profound analysis of Hitler's state of mind. There were three brief nondescript letters to the Popp family in Munich, where he had lodged before he joined the army, and one to First Lieutenant Fritz Wiedemann in January 1917, the adjutant at regimental headquarters of whom Hitler requested a transfer from his hospital back to the field unit in France to be with his old comrades.

There was only one letter of importance, sent to a certain Mr. Ernst Hepp on February 5, 1915. In a wordy, impersonal, and contrived description of life at the frontline, Hitler wrote in the vein of a war correspondent. Less than half a year following the outbreak of the war, when men began to move toward the enemy in the spirit of glory and bravery and sacrifice, Hitler clearly showed how quickly he had been worn out by exhaustion and saddened by the thinning of the ranks of his regiment. He had little to say about his thoughts or the changes in his outlook since his days in Vienna.

At the very end of his letter he wrote to Hepp a cursory, personal passage containing a remark that offers a revealing glimpse at his paranoid preoccupations. His perception of the dangers, with which Germans were surrounded, inside and outside, was obvious:

I think a lot about Munich and all of us have only one wish that the final reckoning with the bandits will come . . . and those among us fortunate to see our homeland again will find it cleaner and purified, that the sacrifices and suffering endured daily by hundreds and thousands of us, [and] that through the river of blood flowing day after day against an international world enemy, not only the enemies outside Germany but also the internationalists in our own land, will be crushed. That would be worth more than all acquisitions of territory.⁵⁵

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That there is such a meager record of four years of intense stress for such an emotional man is most remarkable, considering that Hitler's feelings were close to the surface at all times and his mind filled with haunting ideas. He left too lean a harvest for any reliable analysis of the war's impact on the progression in his mental outlook. We virtually do not know what went through his mind in these critical and seemingly endless years. Only by inference is it possible to reconstruct his thoughts. One interpretation is safe to make: War experiences have a devastating effect on men. The writings of Erich Maria Remarque and Ernest Jünger are but two illustrations of the tragedy of common soldiers in combat, men who answered the call to arms or who volunteered to fight, as Hitler did, and who then fought and killed and died.

vision anchored in his love for history and for a patriotic and military life. The war experiences were to shape and mold his paranoid inclination until they took on a final configuration, including the acceptance of violence, ruthlessness, and destructiveness in the service of a noble cause. I gave all indications of having entered the war as a means of finding personal purification, a process by which he had hoped to lift himself out of a mediocre and undistinguished existence that had left him without the prospect of ever being someone special. But he hailed a war he did not know Germany could never win.

The attitudes and emotional set of soldiers everywhere, whose convictions and idealism motivate them to be able to kill or be killed, differed little from Hitler's own feelings. However, there is a significant difference observed in the effect of these experiences on Hitler's choice of conduct afterward and the decisions he made that reflected a pattern in his character and personality formation. Not all men in the Kaiser's army, influenced during the war years, emerged with Hitler's outlook on life.

The Incubation Period of Hitler's paranoia reached its concluding phase in the chaos of the defeat and the collapse of the Kaiser's era in which Germans felt entitled to join the ranks of the European superpowers. Emperor's New Reich had lasted barely fifty years. Its collapse was a national catastrophe that catapulted Hitler into the public scene. He was intent on resurrecting the dreams of another new Reich—his Third Reich. In the analysis, he only prolonged Germany's agony for another thirty years through a frantic and futile effort to establish a unified and powerful nation, designed to dominate first Europe and then the entire world.

The Fermentation Years, 1919-1941

When the First World War was coming to an end, Hitler was in Pasewalk Hospital near Berlin, a victim of the ever-desperate efforts of the warring nations to discover new weapons systems—in this case, poison gas. Gas warfare had become the most hideous method devised so far to kill human beings. It produced the most severe suffering of any such method, causing excruciating pains in the eyes and lungs, nausea, suffocation, and a slow choking to death. When Hitler was temporarily blinded, the doctors who treated him were still inexperienced in the treatment of gas injuries, for there was hardly any knowledge of the effects of mustard gas behind the frontlines.

1918

Hitler was in the trenches in Flanders when the British struck on the morning of October 15, 1918, at Montagne. The panicky screams of "Gas!" and the banging of big gongs sounded the alarm for a mustard gas attack. Men frantically reached for their gas masks, known to be barely effective for protection from injuries to eyes and lungs. Hitler either did not hear in time the desperate shouting of his comrades or the banging of gongs or did not succeed in fitting his gas mask in time. In any case, his eyes were injured and he was temporarily blinded. One soldier led him and other afflicted men to a field station. Within days he was on his long way back to his homeland to recuperate in a veterans' hospital at Pasewalk. Within three weeks the swelling of his eyes reduced and the irritation to his lung tissues cleared up. He regained his eyesight. On November 18, he was discharged and declared fit for service.

These three weeks at the hospital were to prove a most critical period in Hitler's life. He experienced the collapse of imperial Germany and the end of four years of a desperate war effort. Facing an uncertain future at age

twenty-nine, he found himself unready for civilian life, not having acquired any skills to make a living. His intense inner drive and the increasing strength of his convictions made him decide to enter politics. In this regard, these three weeks became the beginning of a career that gradually unfolded before ending up in the excesses of another war, twenty-one years later.

Shortly before Hitler was wounded at Montagne, the German chiefs of staff, Generals Paul von Hindenburg and Erich Ludendorff, had reached the conclusion that the war was lost, and they advised the government to bid for an armistice. The news reached Pasewalk on November 9, 1918. The hospital chaplain addressed the wounded soldiers on November 11 to inform them with stirred emotions and tearful eyes about the end of the war and of the Reich and their Kaiser. Not only had the German High Command admitted defeat and sued for a ceasefire, but the entire structure of imperial Germany was falling apart. Navy men at the Kiel Naval Station were mutinous—a most unheard of event in the Prussian-German military tradition—and the mustachioed, saber-rattling Kaiser Wilhelm II was forced to abdicate. The symbol of Germany's nationalistic self-assertion, a man who had contributed so much to the outbreak of the Great War, he fled into exile in Holland. He left behind a country facing the task of reorganizing itself along democratic lines by forming a republic. Seated in the small town of Weimar, the new government chose a site totally untarnished by any political or military legacy and had no more to offer than being recognized as a center of the German poetic tradition of Johann Wolfgang von Goethe.

When all this happened, Hitler was still in Pasewalk in a state of acute physical and emotional distress. After the chaplain had announced the collapse of the German war effort, Hitler broke down and cried bitterly. Until this moment he had shown a remarkable stoic quality in absorbing the turmoil of his Vienna years and the trauma of a gruesome war. The collapse of his country was more than he could take. It entailed at the same time the collapse of his own personal vision of Germany as a nation of greatness. He flung himself in tears onto his hospital cot in disbelief that all the sacrifices and sufferings of so many for so long should have been in vain. "Since the day I stood at the grave of my mother I had not cried until now," he said.

He was at the midstation of his life and, in spite of his acceptance-craze fantasies, was totally undistinguished. Had he been killed in action, he would have been but one of two million other German war dead who left no traces of their existence and simply vanished, leaving mourning mothers behind.

But he survived, and in trying to cope with the doomsday experience of a lost war, he searched for an explanation of how it was possible for such tragedy to happen. Somebody deserved blame. Believing he had witnessed "the inhuman cruelty" of the Versailles Treaty, the floodgates of his lon-

1918

suppressed, convoluted, and delusional inner world opened. In an outburst of rage over Germany's defeat, Hitler brought to the surface his latent paranoid condition. He confessed, "During those nights hatred grew in me, a hatred towards all those responsible for the deed."³ He labeled them "November criminals" and resolved that whoever had contributed to the collapse of Germany would have to pay a price. They were but a "gang of miserable and desperate criminals."

During the days at Pasewalk the conspiracy theory was reborn. All of Hitler's long-held suspicions about a Jewish international plot to destroy Germany were confirmed in his mind. A revolution had broken out, and "a couple of Jews were 'the leaders,'" whom Hitler called with derision "Orientals."⁵ He vented his fury about the very idea of a revolution, which to him was outright "madness."⁶ All his prewar images about the role Germans and Germany should play in world affairs had shattered. In his mind, only fragments of the glory of the past remained. Brooding about how to rectify this national disaster, he began to glue his thoughts together to form some kind of ideology that could serve the resurrection of his country. Slowly, he had it all worked out in his mind and eventually published his thoughts in book form in 1925, six years later.

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In *Mein Kampf* Hitler recalled how he had entered the war in a state of euphoria about a unique opportunity for Germany to establish itself as a dominant power in the world. He had joyously signed up as a volunteer, thanking "Heaven with an overflowing heart for granting me the good fortunes to be permitted to live in these times."⁷ "Destiny" was taking its course, and he was convinced the war would decide "whether the German nation was to be or not to be."⁸ In his exuberance he exclaimed in a language bordering on the bizarre, "Let Heaven at last give free rein to Fate, which would be thwarted no longer. The first mighty flash of lightning struck the earth. The storm was unleashed, and the thunder of Heaven mingled with the roar of the guns of the Great War."⁹

1914

Such irrational enthusiasm before the shooting had started gradually yielded to frustration, rage, and anger. When it was all over, Hitler found himself in Pasewalk with his dreams of a glorious future for Germany turned into a nightmare. Bismarck's Reich, forged with so much military cunning, had vanished. The promise of everlasting national dominance—first proclaimed in 1861 by Emanuel Geibel in the self-congratulatory arrogant message "Am deutschen Wesen soll die Welt genesen" (the spirit of Germans will help the world thrive)—had lost all sense and meaning. The epoch of imperial ambition had come to an end, inevitably and irrevocably.

To Hitler this was a catastrophic development. He was unable to accept the military defeat as a new reality facing an exhausted and war-weary nation. After all the bugles had sounded the ceasefire, he was unable to view the armistice as ushering in an era of peace; instead, he searched for support of his suspicions that the tragedy of a lost war was caused by betrayal

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Hitler's thoughts mirrored the sentiment of many Germans, who resented being blamed for the outbreak of the war. The war-guilt clause of the Versailles Treaty had generated an unbearable feeling of humiliation. Like the millions of other German soldiers who had trudged faithfully to the trenches feeling condemned to die for a cause only vaguely clear in their minds, Hitler believed something must have gone wrong. How else could the war have been lost? Something treacherous must have happened at the home front, way back in Germany.

These suspicions about the home front were reinforced when no welcome was extended to the returning fighting men after they had marched back from France, their heads high and feeling certain they had been undefeated on the battlefield. They had brought with them memories of terror-filled years. No one but their loved ones cared about their return, and there was nothing to prevent their alienation from civilian life. Deprived of any normal life experience for years, they did not know how to start a nonmilitary existence. For too long they had absorbed events outside the range of a peaceful human existence. Now the time for soldiering and heroism, the time of sacrifice for the Fatherland as a course of duty, suddenly held no value. All they faced were emotional scars, battle fatigue, and uncertainty about their future.

1919 Many of these returning soldiers plunged into a continuation of violence by volunteering in the Freikorps, a kind of militia that fought intrusions of Russians and Poles into the eastern borders of Germany. The Freikorps army units had simply refused to demobilize and were led by officers who were attracted to the *völkisch* ideas of the *völkisch* community that Germany was supposed to be.

Still others returned home fully demoralized and withdrew into a listless and shiftless pattern of life. Shell-shocked and crushed by the dramatically changed conditions of the country, they returned bewildered having fought for so long with dogged determination to wrest victory from a fatefully hopeless situation. They had been living under military discipline for years, unable to move, to eat, to sleep, or to do anything without an order. In a spirit of dejection, they became susceptible to the kind of message of hope Hitler decided to deliver by answering the questions: What next? Who would govern the country? What would the Kaiser's country become?

Hitler shared this state of desperation with his fellow Germans. He had gone to war alone and had now returned alone, having nowhere to go. The war was over, but it did not die within him. And it did not die around him either. It kept on smoldering in Russia, in Turkey, in Greece, in Syria, and in other lands. Hitler looked around and saw only ruins of the old

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order: failing dynasties, kings and emperors leaving empty thrones behind, and revolutions and counterrevolutions—successful in Russia but failing in Germany.

After years of hostility, the promise of peace did not meet anybody's expectations, for peace did not bring about a humane end to the deadly strain of war. Germans did not recover quickly from the feverish pitch of outright hatred, rivalry, and envy, which had reigned among the European nations for so many years before as well as during the war. During the postwar chaos it was nearly impossible to start a new era short of starting a revolution to overcome the legacy of the nineteenth century with its imperialistic expansions, colonial aggrandizements, and rabid nationalism.

Hitler meant to do exactly that, start a revolution, to topple the ruling classes with their monarchistic leaning. He also meant to start fighting the internationalism of Bolsheviks and Socialists. To him, the Weimar Republic was not an acceptable model for accomplishing such goals. The answer was a one-man rule. Disguised under the positive-sounding notion of leadership, he introduced the concept of dictatorship that Germans embraced without understanding the direction in which Hitler would lead them. In the climate of anarchy and despair, hunger and disease, inflation and unemployment, the idea of a *Führerstaat*, a law-and-order nation, did not seem to frighten them. Leadership was badly needed, and they heard Hitler declare his intention to stop the steady disintegration of German society. When Hitler set out to begin his political career in 1919, Germany was a frightfully split country, divided into the many stout, victory-minded burghers who believed in the stab-in-the-back theory to explain the causes of the national tragedy, and the war-weary hungry masses that had welcomed the end of the war with a sigh of relief. He identified with the nationalists without showing any interest in restoring the old social structure of the monarchy and was intent on continuing to fight the war against the "real enemy" who had snatched victory away from Germans at the last minute. And the real enemy was the "international Jew," whom Hitler had suspected all along of seeking fulfillment of his world-spanning ambitions by using the social and political infrastructure as a vehicle to rule.

The leaders of the Social Democratic party became Hitler's immediate target. He was convinced that "only the knowledge of Judaism can offer the key to understanding of the hidden aims and therefore of the true intentions of social democracy."¹⁰ To him socialism, Marxism, and Judaism were all the same. "Jews are merely using Western democracy to organize their assault and achieve their conquest. . . . Today European nations are already willing tools of Western democracy and are in direct control of Russian Bolshevism."¹¹ Behind these Jewish activities he perceived the "widespread sweeping desire to realize their hopes for a Jewish world empire."¹²

Once Hitler had convinced himself that he had discovered the existence of a Jewish plot, he became obsessed with the idea of doing something

1919

about it by acquiring the means of preventing the realization of its objectives. He knew that without power his whole thinking about combating a danger to society would be nothing more than a fanciful notion of no particular consequence, no more than the equivalent of a scurrile catharsis of venomous impulses. But he was also fully aware that a man who remains unknown is without influence, and his ideas carry no weight. "As a nameless person I did not possess the minimum credentials to start any meaningful action," he admitted in all candor, fully realizing that power and success are interdependent.¹³

His smoldering hatred of Jews would not remain a personal issue any longer but would take on a new dimension if he were to bring himself into a position of power. To that end he joined a small political party in Munich "following two days of agonizing, pondering, and reflection."¹⁴ It consisted of a handful of rightist, idealistic supernationalists called the Deutsche Arbeiter Partei (DAP), the German Workers party.

1919 Initially, power was no more than the power of words. Hitler discovered this immediately on his first visit to the DAP in the fall of 1919 when he spoke up and entered an ardent debate. With astonishment, more than confidence, he reported later on his amazing discovery: "I could speak!"¹⁵ When he applied for membership, he quickly made the boastful statement that his "gifts in the field are generally recognized."¹⁶

Hitler's fascination for the power of words fused quickly with his growing awareness of the unlimited possibilities political and military power would yield. But he would have to wait fourteen more years, until 1933, before he acquired such powers as chancellor of the Republic. It was an experience of importance beyond anything he had ever known. Although he had been an ideologically minded youth, an idle dreamer, a young thinker who sought answers to the many questions of the human condition, his bent for political thinking enabled him to know intuitively that ambition and vision go hand in hand with power.

"In these years, endless plans were chasing in my mind,"¹⁷ Hitler said, groping for a chance to find himself. When he discovered his talent as a speaker, he knew at once that people would take notice, perhaps even take him seriously and identify with his ideas. He sensed that within grasp were the means for influencing people as well as the means for obtaining the political power to sustain such influence. He was no longer the rambling young man of the Männerheim, nor the quiet, obedient, and unobtrusive soldier of the war years.

In due course, the combination of Hitler's power of oratory and his radical anti-Semitic sentiments became fatal for history. Whereas anti-Semitism was the *Leitmotiv* in his life, it was physical power that enabled him to achieve the objectives of his destructive wishes regarding Jews.

Hitler's road to power was paved with his charismatic qualities. He quickly learned to spin out his ideas with a dazzling display of emotion, guile, and

unbridled conviction. He portrayed himself as a believer in Germany's future, ever willing to make any sacrifice for his beloved Fatherland. His patriotism was infectious, and Germans admired the bemedaled unknown soldier who refused to accept his country's defeat. They fiercely rejected the blame with which the Versailles Treaty had saddled Germany for having started the war of 1914-18. Hitler firmly affixed guilt on a minority living in Germany, Jews, and launched a carefully calculated attack on a so-called alien and hostile group within Germany whom he blamed for all of Germany's misfortunes.

His belligerence toward Jews lent his speeches a radical and revisionist tone. His virulent attacks delivered to crowds, which grew larger and larger, shocked one reporter who had listened to his speech on June 14, 1920, so much that he reported the next day on Hitler's anti-Semitic diatribes: "What we had to hear from this 'German' man defies all description. He made demand after demand to murder the Jews, and each time the petty bourgeois mob interrupted because of their need to respond to such brutality with howling approval."¹⁸ There was no letup in his agitation. Barely nine months later on March 13, 1921, Hitler ranted in an essay of his party daily newspaper, the *Völkischer Beobachter*, about "Jewish subversion of our people" and suggested that such a national calamity should be prevented by "putting its instigators into concentration camps."¹⁹ It is obvious at the very beginning of his career that he was capable of resorting to violent solutions and intended to approach the answers to the so-called Jewish Question without inhibiting his hostility. His verbal violence foreshadowed what was to happen twelve years later.

Hitler's weapon was his oratory. Alternatingly pleading, passionate, angry, sarcastic, accusatory, and violent, he found a ready-made scapegoat in Jews. Truly believing in his ideas and acting upon his convictions, Hitler did not choose an anti-Semitic position rationally, based on political expediency. He saw himself as a self-styled avenger, a rescuer, and a savior. Germans became ecstatic and were impressed by this spooky, violent, patriotic man who charged up the Weimar Republic and preempted the forum of its parliamentarians by taking the voice away from a multitude of politicians. He simply talked over their heads and aimed his passionate message at the German people directly.

This obscure man, Hitler, without political experience and without being part of the parliamentary system, was accomplishing great deeds. He did not appear to Germans to be a typical special-interest political manipulator; he seemed, instead, a political outsider surrounded by devoted men from the streets who shared his vision of hope. Hitler spoke of national honor, national greatness, and the need to restore the country. He played brilliantly upon the widespread anxieties and fears of the masses and stressed over and over again the need to restore the collective value of the German people—all to be found in Germany's past history. This nostalgic appeal to

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Hitler's success resulted from a triumphant campaign addressing the longings of Germans for stability and unity, longings that exceeded by far their fear of the dreadful consequences Hitler's agitation might cause or of the political dangers of his anti-Semitism. In the minds of Germans, the fate of Jews faded behind the images Hitler conjured up so splendidly of undoing a disastrous era in Germany's history. In the process, he steadily gained raw, popular support.

Hitler's speeches, his tools for creating power, were impressive masterpieces of polemical rhetoric and political agitation, of emotional appeal and portrayal of strength, of distortions and exaggerations, and of manipulations using dramatic and theatrical performances. Behind this razzle-dazzle of talk about rebuilding the country, the basic message of his *Weltanschauung* was still visible: Jews were the mortal enemy. He obscured his true intentions purposefully to mislead the public. When he spoke and preached and coerced, he knew what he was doing. He was brazen enough to admit his deceptiveness publicly in 1938, when he addressed 400 reporters, old cronies, and newspaper editors, boasting about his successful application of psychological warfare. "For years, circumstances have compelled me to talk about nothing but peace. Only by continually stressing Germany's desire for peace and peaceful intentions could I achieve freedom for the German people bit by bit and provide the arms which were necessary before the next step could be taken."²⁰

1938

That next step was obviously the war he started a year later. But he had rushed into the use of power from the very outset. He made his first big move to grab physical power as soon as he had joined the DAP. He wanted it to become his personal instrument to acquire the notoriety he sought. On June 15, 1921, he issued an ultimatum to the members of his party, demanding to be appointed Führer. He argued, "Without iron leadership the Party will in a short time cease to be what it ought to be."²¹ In response, the governing body of the party surrendered its regulatory functions and virtually granted Hitler "dictatorial powers."²²

1921

Now in charge of his own political organization, he renamed the DAP the National Socialist German Workers party (NSDAP). Its membership grew rapidly, and soon the Nazi movement was in full swing. He immediately readied himself for his next objective: seizing control of the country.

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Hitler's speeches, his tools for creating power, were impressive masterpieces of polemical rhetoric and political agitation, of emotional appeal and portrayal of strength, of distortions and exaggerations, and of manipulations using dramatic and theatrical performances. Behind this razzle-dazzle of talk about rebuilding the country, the basic message of his *Weltschauung* was still visible: Jews were the mortal enemy. He obscured his true intentions purposefully to mislead the public. When he spoke and preached and coerced, he knew what he was doing. He was brazen enough to admit his deceptiveness publicly in 1938, when he addressed 400 reporters, old cronies, and newspaper editors, boasting about his successful application of psychological warfare. "For years, circumstances have compelled me to talk about nothing but peace. Only by continually stressing Germany's desire for peace and peaceful intentions could I achieve freedom for the German people bit by bit and provide the arms which were necessary before the next step could be taken."

That next step was obviously the war he started a year later. But he had rushed into the use of power from the very outset. He made his first big move to grab physical power as soon as he had joined the DAP. He wanted it to become his personal instrument to acquire the notoriety he sought. On June 15, 1921, he issued an ultimatum to the members of his party, demanding to be appointed Führer. He argued, "Without iron leadership the Party will in a short time cease to be what it ought to be."²¹ In response, the governing body of the party surrendered its regulatory functions and virtually granted Hitler "dictatorial powers."²²

Now in charge of his own political organization, he renamed the DAP the National Socialist German Workers party (NSDAP). Its membership grew rapidly, and soon the Nazi movement was in full swing. He immediately readied himself for his next objective: seizing control of the country.

→ In these early days Hitler found a model in Benito Mussolini's strategy in Italy and watched the movements of the leading Italian Fascist closely. 1922 Mussolini had come into power on February 22, 1922, by engineering a

* D. T. I had to explain to him how important that word was in these days. The confusion would work for us. A muddy

1923

spectacular march on Rome. Through such a *tour de force* he made himself the leader of Italy and assumed the title of Il Duce.

This was Hitler's style. Inspired by the brazenness of "this great man south of the Alps,"²³ Hitler felt emboldened to undertake a similar march of his own. "We need a revolutionary to lead a march on Berlin,"²⁴ he shouted at a party rally in Bamberg and berated the Bavarian general state commissioner, Gustav von Kahr, for failing to respond to his proposal to stage a coup d'état. Kahr could have easily made himself an accomplice of Hitler's in seizing the Bavarian government. Along with two other cabinet members, he had been granted emergency dictatorial powers by the prime minister to stabilize a civil war-like condition in Bavaria. By temperament and nature, Kahr was not suited to be a dictator and refused to collaborate with Hitler in this power scheme. Hitler grew impatient and decided to go it alone.

Four weeks later, on November 8, 1923, he was ready to take action. Yet in his first attempt to establish himself as a dictator, Hitler failed miserably. In the evening of this day at 8:45 P.M., when Kahr was in the midst of a speech in the Bürgerbräukeller, Hitler invaded the premises with some 600 of his Brownshirts to stage his Beer Hall Putsch to establish a national dictatorship. He burst into the hall, pistol drawn, jumped on a table and fired a shot into the ceiling to get the immediate attention of a startled audience, consisting of 3,000 confused people, among whom were the leading citizens of Munich, the principle members of the Bavarian cabinet, and the triumvirate of which Kahr was one. At the top of his lungs Hitler screamed in a most dramatic fashion, "The National Revolution has broken out!"²⁵ He declared the Bavarian government suspended and, for good measure, also dismissed the national government in Berlin.

It did not all fare as he had anticipated. In a desperate bid to salvage a losing cause, a Mussolini-type march on Munich was set in motion the very next day. It was stopped by a volley of police fire near the Feldherrnhalle. Fourteen Nazis were killed. They were to become the martyrs of the Nazi movement in years to come.

After the Putsch collapsed, Hitler ended up in jail. The Nazi party was outlawed, and all prominent Nazis who had participated were tried for treason. Hitler spent eight months of a five-year sentence in the fortress prison of Landsberg, from which he was released a few days before Christmas on December 19, 1924. He spent his holidays in the country home of the Hanfstaengl family, who were among his closest followers. On Christmas Eve, his vengeful feelings erupted without inhibition. Ernst Hanfstaengl reported that Hitler offered "his usual tirades against the Jews, but this time with more radical undertones. He is convinced that not only Wall Street but all America is controlled by Jews."²⁶

1924

In reflecting on his first dramatic attempt to seize governmental control

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 Xerxes pay extra taxes to put in P. 128.
 - somewhat compromised allegiance
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1923

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by force, some twelve years later, Hitler expressed regret. He viewed the episode as "the most desperate, daring decision of my life. When I now look back on it in thought, I grow dizzy."²⁷ But this political disaster had taught him very little. Had he lived long enough to look back on all of his decisions in life, such as the Russian invasion, he might have discovered many more irrational, desperate, and daring decisions. The 1923 coup attempt by a man who was but a noisy orator was a futile enterprise from the beginning, just as his conquest of Russia would have needed a miracle to achieve success. His Putsch at best earned him public notoriety. At that time, according to Colin Cross, he "was driven on by an overpowering sense of destiny and believed that he had a chance of winning."²⁸ Hitler always felt driven by destiny, as he equated any decision making with the compulsion to tempt fate in the same way a gambler pursues his thrill-seeking activities in the firm belief that he will win the jackpot.

(1924)
~~1923~~ The only lesson Hitler learned was a practical one: to forego reliance on physical force for the time being and adopt a more calculating attitude by trusting his impulsivity and intuition less. It was a superficial adaptation to cope with new realities, for he had also learned to believe in the necessity of obtaining absolute power to avoid another disastrous set back. His new course of building a power base first before attempting to achieve dictatorial control through the utilization of the prevailing political system reduced the meaning of his career prior to his imprisonment in Landsberg to a "relatively brief but intense stage in Hitler's life, which marked his transition from soldier to political propagandist."²⁹ It was a calculated move. Underneath, Hitler retained his gambler mentality.

The eight months of incarceration in Landsberg ultimately proved a fatal blow to the stability of the Western world. In the relative confinement of a prison suite, enjoying many creature comforts while surrounded by cronies and literally holding court, Hitler was given ample leisure time to think. His paranoid conceptions congealed and were then cast into the framework of a book that was intended to become the guiding beacon showing all Germans the way to become good Nazis. What the Bible had been for Christians *Mein Kampf* was to be for National Socialists.

1924 A pivotal element in Hitler's thinking about the fate of the Jews was the thorny challenge of resolving the so-called Jewish Problem. On June 29, 1924, in the midst of these contemplations, he was interviewed for a Nazi magazine regarding any changes in his views on Jews. He had achieved clarity by now on what had to be done, and he said:

Yes, yes, it is correct to say that I have changed my opinion on the strategy of fighting Jews. I have realized that I have been much too lenient up to now! While working on my book I have finally come to understand that in the future the harshest methods of combating them must be employed if we are to win. I am convinced that this is not only a matter of survival for our nation but for other nations. For the Jew is the plague of the world.³⁰

Hitler was ready to announce to the world his far-reaching plans for conquest, oppression, and world dominance. At this station in his life he staked out his objectives in two volumes, the first published on July 18, 1925, and the second on December 11, 1926. In these two volumes he clearly spelled out two goals. Stripped of all side issues, the core of his ideology was simple enough: first, to get rid of Jews and eliminate a dangerous rival to German ambitions; and second, to create more living space, *Lebensraum*, for Germany's crowded population by conquering and colonizing the territories in Eastern Europe.³¹ These two formidable objectives constitute a mind-boggling scope of violent international conflict. The devastating consequences of any attempt to implement such a program was lost on the German people.

Armed with these thoughts, Hitler set his mind on laying the foundation for control of the nation. In less than ten years, on January 30, 1933, he achieved his objective, being appointed chancellor of the Republic by the eighty-six-year-old Reich president, Paul von Hindenburg, the father figure of postwar Germans and the one-time leader of the German war effort in his role as supreme commander of the German army. By the time he appointed Hitler, he had grown into a feeble, senile, old man, a mere shadow of his old self, whose mind wandered off to the days of Kaiser Wilhelm II, prompting him on one occasion to address Hitler as "His Majesty."

Hitler saw to it that from the day of his appointment he would officially hold the title of Führer and Reich chancellor. By law, hastily framed by the cabinet, he also assumed the prerogatives of the office of the Reich president and, most significantly, of the commander in chief of the armed forces. In no time, Hitler's power base was broadened beyond anything friend or foe could have imagined. He further cemented his influence by having all generals and admirals take an oath of personal loyalty to him.³²

Hitler was finally in control of the vehicle designed to drive him into the spectacular career now about to unfold. The taste of power was to kindle ever greater visions and ambitions, and he was never to stop using this power in the relentless pursuit of his ultimate objective: achieving world dominance by planning both the destruction of Jews and the conquest of Eastern Europe.

Germans became his tools. The way a predator senses the weaknesses of a potential victim and stalks its prey before striking for the kill, Hitler sensed the receptivity of Germans to firm leadership and willingness to do his bidding in the attack on Jews. Although the public's response in the beginning of his career had been insignificant, when judged in the light of the national political scene, it sufficiently encouraged Hitler to believe that his fantastic dreams were not so fantastic after all and were moving closer now to the realm of possibilities. As Führer and Reich chancellor he had achieved a critical baseline from which to depart on his long-range plans.

With the establishment of a strong position of power Hitler seemed sud-

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1929

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1939

The hopes of Germans materialized when Hitler, in the brief span o several years following his appointment, began to do more to advance the restoration of Germany than any other politician of his time. He initiate social and economic programs to create work and optimism and security. The ensuing enrichment of German daily life was revolutionary and hi movement far-reaching. He summed up his accomplishments in a self-congratulatory comment at the end of a lengthy three-hour address at noontime on April 28, 1939, before the Reichstag in the presence of many foreign dignitaries who had returned to Berlin to hear Hitler after their recall i protest against the Kristallnacht pogrom five months earlier.

1938

1939

I overcame chaos in Germany, restored order, enormously raised production in all fields of our national economy, through extraordinary exertion created substitutes for many non-available raw materials, paved the way for new inventions, stimulated our transportation system, and ordered mighty roads to be constructed. I had canals dug, called into existence giant factories and attempted to serve my country by developing a social community, and support education and the arts. I have succeeded totally in incorporating into our industrial production our seven million unemployed. I kept our farmers on their soil in spite of all difficulties. . . . In order to protect ourselves from the threat of a larger world, I have not only politically united the German people but also had them rearmed militarily. . . . I have returned to our nation the provinces robbed from us in 1919. . . . I have restored the thousand-year-old unity of German living space, and I have done all this without shedding any blood and have spared my own people and other nations the suffering of war. . . . I have accomplished all this by my own efforts as a man who twenty-one years ago was still an unknown worker and a soldier of my people.³³

This approach met with remarkable success. Germans loved their Führer for representing their interests against a hostile world and the opposition within. When they cheered this speech, they had no inkling that Hitler's

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war, which was to bring them indescribable suffering, was but five months away.

He was said to have succeeded as the result of his irresistible charisma. It is true that, gifted with incredible rhetorical skills and the instinct for theatrical effects, he said what the public wanted to hear: that there was somebody willing and eager to do something to improve the lot of the common man. In the grip of such preoccupations, no one cared much to know who Hitler was as a private person. The public image mattered, and when he spoke he could ignite into jolts of fury and harangues of anger and threats, seemingly losing all self-restraint. Always deadly serious, he was a man whose rage should be feared. His vocabulary was breezy and colloquial, his demeanor that of a natural actor, and his thoughts dangerous. His facial expressions and his gesturing were but instruments he played with genial effectiveness.

Hitler's countenance was dominated by the unstylish lock of hair on his forehead, his burning hypnotic eyes, and his small moustache, a leftover of the trends among the men in the trenches in France. This was not the countenance of a cautious, careful, and responsible leader of a nation but of a man filled with indignation, inner rage, injured pride, and a fierce determination to have things go his way. A chilling distance separated him from all but a few intimates. No one obtained a glimpse of what he truly thought. His eyes took aim and revealed the ferocity and desire for vengeance of a man with the capacity to kill.

The simplicity and repetitiveness of Hitler's arguments were typical for the demagogic bent of his mind, keenly struggling with good and evil. Life itself was the issue, the worldwide struggle between life-inspiring Germans and life-destroying Jews.

The powerful influence of Hitler's rhetoric, and his skill in imposing his personal will on the Germans, were to become the most characteristic features of the Nazi regime. His message was billed as a reflection of a miraculous awakening of a mighty nation, which had been mistreated and humiliated by the rest of the world for many years. "Deutschland Erwache!"—Germany Awake!—was the wake-up call for the nation. Hitler cajoled and exoriated his audiences, demonstrating an astonishing talent to uplift the spirits of a dejected nation that had suffered from the plight of extreme unemployment and inflation. Germans became euphoric about this sudden, seeming improvement in their daily lot, and about economic improvements in the country. They seemed to be in a state of intoxication with Hitler, an intoxication from which they were not to recover fully until the severe reverses of the Second World War.

The outbreak of hostility on September 1, 1939, had a strikingly sobering influence on Germans, as reported by many objective observers at that time.³⁴ Germans were numbed by the breathtaking speed with which events had occurred. In setting this pace, Hitler's initiative kept him ahead of the

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mood of the nation. Germans lagged in their ability to grasp the enormous, far-reaching consequences of their support of what Hitler made happen. Nor did they ever understand the impact their Führer's actions had on their image in the eyes of the non-German world. Josef Goebbels's propaganda mill was grinding out the constant message of how wonderfully things were going for the Germans and how many reasons they had for indulging in self-congratulation. Domestic and foreign policy changed so rapidly that the average citizen simply could not keep up with it.

Hitler wasted little time in trying to reach his first objective. In power less than two months, he began to strike out seriously at Jews. The boundaries between law and terror had been blurred for some time, certainly from the very beginning when the Nazi party took over the organization of the German population by using intimidation to restore law and order. On April 1, 1933, a massive nationwide boycott of Jews was initiated with the intention of disrupting and ultimately ruining the economic existence of Jews. In 1933, American history professor Jacob Marcus, at Hebrew Union College, observing the situation in Germany from a distance, characterized it in this way:

At present the report of atrocities has practically ceased, but the terrorism under which the Jewish people live has increased with the growing power of the new government. Open violence, which aroused so many protests from the rest of the world . . . has been replaced by a more insidious but equally effective policy of "human extermination." This policy is being applied without mercy to all whom Hitler and his cohorts regard as the enemies of the German state.³⁵

33 An effort to oppress Jews legally was executed shortly after the boycott, a week later, on April 7, 1933. The "Aryan paragraph" of the law for the restoration of the civil service reduced Jews to second-class citizens. This measure effectively eliminated all Jews from positions as officials in the national, municipal, or local government. They were not even able to serve as railway or streetcar conductors, as most public utilities belonged to the government. Jewish civil servants were thus effectively retired. There were also to be no Jews holding positions in municipal hospitals or in public schools. Even Jewish lawyers suffered restrictions, and 40 percent were disbarred, with the rest facing professional ruin because no Jewish attorney dared present a case before a Nazi judge or jury. Restrictions against Jews in the academic field aimed at preventing Jews from exercising any cultural influence on German life.

36 The terror continued with the enactment of the Nuremberg Laws two years later on September 15, 1935, through which for all practical purposes Jews were deprived of their rights as citizens. Hastily drafted in many night sessions, the Nuremberg Laws were the critical step in "setting the legal framework for a campaign of Aryanization to organize the confiscation of

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Hitler wasted little time in trying to reach his first objective. In power less than two months, he began to strike out seriously at Jews. The boundaries between law and terror had been blurred for some time, certainly from the very beginning when the Nazi party took over the organization of the German population by using intimidation to restore law and order. On April 1, 1933, a massive nationwide boycott of Jews was initiated with the intention of disrupting and ultimately ruining the economic existence of Jews. In 1933, American history professor Jacob Marcus, at Hebrew Union College, observing the situation in Germany from a distance, characterized it in this way:

At present the report of atrocities has practically ceased, but the terrorism under which the Jewish people live has increased with the growing power of the new government. Open violence, which aroused so many protests from the rest of the world . . . has been replaced by a more insidious but equally effective policy of "human extermination." This policy is being applied without mercy to all whom Hitler and his cohorts regard as the enemies of the German state.³⁵

33 An effort to oppress Jews legally was executed shortly after the boycott, a week later, on April 7, 1933. The "Aryan paragraph" of the law for the restoration of the civil service reduced Jews to second-class citizens. This measure effectively eliminated all Jews from positions as officials in the national, municipal, or local government. They were not even able to serve as railway or streetcar conductors, as most public utilities belonged to the government. Jewish civil servants were thus effectively retired. There were also to be no Jews holding positions in municipal hospitals or in public schools. Even Jewish lawyers suffered restrictions, and 40 percent were disbarred, with the rest facing professional ruin because no Jewish attorney dared present a case before a Nazi judge or jury. Restrictions against Jews in the academic field aimed at preventing Jews from exercising any cultural influence on German life.

35 The terror continued with the enactment of the Nuremberg Laws two years later on September 15, 1935, through which for all practical purposes Jews were deprived of their rights as citizens. Hastily drafted in many night sessions, the Nuremberg Laws were the critical step in "setting the legal framework for a campaign of Aryanization to organize the confiscation of

Jewish property."³⁶ These tactics succeeded only too well. Prior to the Kristallnacht in November 1938, 150,000 Jews had left Germany. There- 38
after another 150,000 managed to escape from the grip of this persecution.
Hitler's need to practice what he preached proceeded at all deliberate speed.

Hitler's thoughts never deviated from the same agitated, hostile, and suspicious mode with its underlying paranoid tone, already visible in his *Mein Kampf*: "Since the end of the war, the course of our destiny—now quite undisguised—is directed by Jews. . . . One has to reach the conclusion that there is a conscious intent on destroying our nation."³⁷ From the outset Hitler had seen only one solution in meeting such a perceived threat: violent retaliation. He was blunt in expressing his conviction that "terror must be met with terror."³⁸ That terror he meant to direct against Jews, whom he saw forever plotting to achieve their goal through the insidious use of socialism as the politically most effective weapon to subvert nations. Social democracy must be "confronted by an ideology of greater truth but with equal brutality,"³⁹ he said. This paranoid thought was consistently central to his entire conception of political reality. 24
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Hitler's attitudes toward Jews and the compulsion to remove their alleged threat had never diminished. Once these ideas had lodged in his mind with frightening tenacity and unmodified sameness, they became the principle psychological force driving him. From the day he became chancellor, he had aimed at reaching his first objective. He meant to destroy Jews one way or the other, and he was well on his way toward the Holocaust.

With equal haste Hitler pursued his second objective: conquest. He had seen to it that Germans had bread and butter and plenty of work, but he also saw to it that they had guns. And guns were more important to him than bread and butter. It seemed that he was moving at an ever faster pace when the rearmament program became a hidden agenda from the day he assumed power. He needed but six years as chancellor to turn these guns loose on the world in September 1939.

Hitler had hardly been installed, on January 30, 1933, when he immediately called a meeting with senior army and navy officers, four days later on February 3, 1933, in the home of the Reichswehr General Kurt von Hammerstein, then the commander in chief of the army. 33 How eager Hitler must have been to get his message across to the leading military men, and how long Hitler must have mentally prepared himself for this moment! Such swift contact with the military revealed Hitler's obvious haste in conveying his intentions to direct the leading men of the armed forces.

During this encounter Hitler delivered a two-hour speech in an obvious effort to enlist their support. From the very beginning of his exercise of power, he spelled out that he expected collaboration in the pursuit of his political goals. "This path I have set out will take many years to tread," he announced, according to David Irving.⁴⁰ He then elaborated on his objec-

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tives to seize the territories of Eastern Europe and to Germanize the conquered space ruthlessly. He also stressed the need to prepare German youth for the upcoming struggle with the rival Bolshevik ideology. Marxism had to be exterminated "root and branch," he declared.⁴¹ Since Hitler had always seen in Marxism a symbol of the plans of the Jewish mind to establish world dominance, his opposition to it simply reflected his goal to destroy Jews.

During the six years between 1933 and 1939, Hitler set a feverish pace to implement his plan of conquest. Events began to tumble over each other as he went about consolidating his control over the country. With frenetic eagerness he instituted changes to forge a militarily strong Reich that would assert itself in German and world history. In the process he coerced the German people to conform to his will.

135 With lightning speed he eliminated all political opposition, personal rivals, and old enemies, especially in the bloody massacre of the Röhm affair on June 30, 1934. ~~He reincorporated the Saar territory into the Reich half~~ a year later on January 13, 1935. The preparations for rebuilding the army were completed two months after the revisionistic move in the Saar region. He introduced a new conscription law on March 16, 1935, following a previous announcement that Germany already had a new airforce—the nucleus of the awesome Luftwaffe of the future.

With an equally rapid pace he organized in utter secrecy his massive rearmament program. On March 7, 1936, in open violation of the provisions of the Versailles Treaty, he exercised his newly acquired muscle by reoccupying the demilitarized zone in the Rhineland, the very year when the Berlin Olympic Games were celebrating the peaceful competition of the athletes of the world.

Nothing illustrates better the haste with which Hitler proceeded than the mind-boggling speed with which he expanded and outfitted the army in preparation for his military objectives. A year following the beginning of his dictatorship a light-weight tank manned by a crew of two and weighing only six tons, and mounting two machine guns in a turret, was already being produced. Their drivers trained in unarmed models by the summer of 1934. This tank was in mass production by the end of the same year. Just two years later, 3,000 MK-I tanks, a more advanced model, were already in the hands of the army. Heavier and better-armed models were built in quick succession. A supermodel, which was to become the Tiger tank of World War II fame, was already on the drawing board at the Henschel Company as early as 1936.⁴²

The army was expanding at a breathtaking pace from seven to thirty-six divisions, needing 20,000 more officers than were available. The training program to produce this number was rapidly accelerated by reducing the training period from the customary four years to barely two. When Hitler came to power, 180 candidates had been admitted to officer-training schools.

Five years later, by 1938, the number had risen to 2,000. The organizational challenge for such an expansion and mobilization of the armed forces posed a formidable assignment to create an industrial support base and to produce the equipment for such a vast expansion program. The preparation for Hitler's long-range objectives were in full swing before the world had even an inkling of the vast extent of his military effort. 38

And there was no letdown. Within a year's time, in the summer of 1937, Hitler involved his new Wehrmacht in the Spanish Civil War to test out his new weaponry. Only a month later, on September 7, at the gigantic annual party rally in Nuremberg, he proudly announced that he had already achieved three major objectives: "First, the Treaty of Versailles is eradicated! Secondly, Germany is free again! Thirdly, our new armed forces will be the guarantor of our freedom!"⁴³ 37

Germans welcomed this militant aggressive stance, which enabled them to confront the world from a position of strength. They derived some vicarious pleasure from the belief they had foiled the Allies' intention to reduce Germany to an insignificant nation following the loss of the war in 1918. They sadly failed to see that the boastful pronouncements of their leader veiled his preparation for a far-reaching military confrontation with the rest of the world in the near future.

Hitler's political intentions were totally fused with his war objectives. He felt compelled to accelerate his program with ever-increasing impatience. Aware of his growing older, he dreaded that he might not have time left to accomplish his lofty goals. New events seemed to happen in monthly intervals. During the winter of 1937-38, preparations for the annexation of Austria were made. On March 12, as spring was nearing, Austria became incorporated into the Third Reich in one swift stroke. The enormity of this expansion, leading to the founding of Greater Germany and bringing Hitler a significant step closer to his aim of shaping a powerful new Reich, was hardly digested by the populace when on November 7, 1938, a major unfortunate event played into Hitler's hand, enabling him to come yet closer to his primary objective, the removal of Jews. The German councillor, Ernst von Rath, was killed at the Paris embassy by the nineteen-year-old Polish youth Hershel Grynszpan, whose parents had just been ejected from Germany and shipped to Poland in connection with an anti-Semitic pogrom against Polish Jews in Germany.⁴⁴ 38

The assassination fanned the anti-Semitic hatred in the country. A massive pogrom against all Jews in Germany was organized in which business establishments were smashed and synagogues burned to bring financial ruin to as many Jews as possible, apart from the intimidating and terrorizing intent of such punitive activity. While Hitler's role in this matter was seemingly subdued, it did not take long for him to bare the true nature of his horrendous hatred. Three months following the Kristallnacht, and one month following the Christmas holiday, on January 30, 1939, his hateful plan to 38

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destroy Jewish life surfaced clearly in his massive threat directed against the Jews of the world. In his speech on the occasion of the sixth anniversary of his appointment as chancellor—boastfully referred to by Nazis as their “seizure of power”—he shouted with unrestrained rage his often-quoted passage, “Should international Jewry succeed in plunging the nations once more into a World War, then the result will be . . . the annihilation of the Jewish race throughout Europe.”⁴⁵ He was deadly serious about this threat

and repeated it on five occasions—January 30, 1942; September 30, 1942; February 24, 1943; March 21, 1943; and November 9, 1943—covering a time span in which the Holocaust extermination activities were organized and reached their climax.⁴⁶

On March 15, 1939, less than three months further down the path of the Nazi regime, Hitler dismembered Czechoslovakia. And less than six months lapsed after this event when Hitler invaded Poland to launch his war, which was to bring short-lived military triumphs but essentially unleashed all those forces opposing nazism that eventually doomed him and his plans.

Hitler's initially startling military victories distorted his reality perceptions by reinforcing his belief in the infallibility of his judgment and the absolute correctness of his mission. Fate had been guiding him, he felt sure, not only dictating his decisions but also blessing his successes. Poland was subdued in eighteen days; Denmark in two weeks; Norway in three weeks; Holland in five days; Belgium in eighteen days; and France in six weeks. Hitler believed he was moving from triumph to triumph; in reality, he was moving from crisis to crisis. He believed the illusion that his goals of achieving world dominance and subjugating Jews was in the process of becoming reality. Just one final objective had to be achieved: the conquest of the Soviet Union to destroy his ideological rival, the “Jewish” Bolshevik empire. His chronic fear of Jewish worldwide influence had mobilized him for this moment of confrontation. His preparations were now fueled by his greed for territory without his realizing how much his ever more expansive need to control huge areas of Eastern Europe would pose a defiant challenge to the rest of the world.

The Russian campaign, codenamed Barbarossa, had been on his mind since the days he first spoke about his global dreams in his book, *Mein Kampf*, seventeen years earlier. The idea surfaced as soon as he came to power. Four days after his appointment as chancellor, on February 3, 1933, in the assembly of commanding generals and admirals he announced his intention of eventually conquering Russia. Exactly eight years later to the day, on February 3, 1941, only five months before he actually launched his attack on Russia, he gave another speech to confident and war-minded generals to declare the moment had come to take this fateful step. With boastful excitement he said, “When Barbarossa commences, the whole world will hold its breath.”⁴⁷ No army had existed in 1933 to undertake such a venture, but in 1941 Hitler had at his disposal the most efficient war ma-

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He should have been euphoric to have come that far, when he stood at the threshold of reaching his second major objective; instead, so Irving tells us, "he showed signs of depression and nervousness,"⁴⁸ as if it had dawned upon him that he was stepping beyond reason and might reach the limits of his grandiose visions. It was much too late to stop the momentum of his thoughts or the expansiveness of his plans. The driving forces of his delusions had reached the point of no return: He felt compelled to act upon his obsession to conquer as much territory as possible, and he was obsessed with carrying out his plans to destroy Jews. Conquering Russia and exterminating Jews were but two different manifestations of one and the same impulse.

Joachim Fest observed, "He was not the man to be deterred from realizing his life dream when only a few weeks of fighting separated him from it."⁴⁹ Yet he was beset by an ominous premonition that his Russian adventure might turn into the beginning of his own undoing. His apprehensions prior to the assault reflected his underlying fear of being known in history after all as a man whose dreams were psychotic conflagrations of fantastic ideas bound to fail disastrously. The all-or-none principle, the gambler's compulsion to wage everything, win or lose, stirred his doubts about the outcome of his undertaking. In the midst of last-minute preparations before unleashing his mighty Wehrmacht, he said, "I feel as if I'm pushing open the door to a dark room never seen before without knowing what lies behind it."⁵⁰

Hitler indeed had entered the twilight zone of his paranoia. The single-mindedness with which he had mentally constructed the picture of a perfect world free of threatening Jews was linked with an irrational determination to remove such a threat and thus generated the impulse to act. His biographer, Fest, captured the essence of Hitler's disturbance: "A prey to his psychosis, he saw Germany as the object of a worldwide conspiracy, pressed on all sides by Bolsheviks, Free Masons, capitalists, Jesuits, all hand-in-glove with each other and directed in their nefarious projects by the bloodthirsty and avaricious Jewish tyrant."⁵¹ Hitler entered the final and concluding phase of his paranoia. Acting upon his impulse to take on the Russian colossus, he also felt driven to implement a Final Solution for his unfortunate victims, the Jewish people. The urge to find a solution to the Jewish problem, as Eberhard Jäckel put it, "has preoccupied him . . . throughout his life more than foreign policy."⁵² In launching into Russia, he started the ultimate destructive campaign that sealed the fate of six million Jews—and that of Germany as well.

The Disintegration Phase, 1941-1945

The initially spectacular successes of Hitler's attempt to conquer Soviet Russia during the summer and fall of 1941 beclouded the fact that, instead, a spectacular failure was in the making from which neither he and his nazism nor Germany, with its unrealistic historical aspirations, would be able to recover. With his overambitious outreach using all his power and influence, Hitler had climbed to the zenith of his career in a campaign beyond which only colossal disaster was waiting. The courses of his ideological and racial confrontation with Russia's bolshevism was to unveil the incredible absurdity of his fantastic schemes. His Russian venture was to consume him and his creation, Nazi Germany.

He had speculated all his life that Russia would collapse sooner or later in a state of utter anarchy and could be conquered without major sacrifices.¹ He held on to this notion, formed early in his career, as he prepared himself mentally for the Russian campaign.

Barely four weeks had passed following the celebration of his great victory over France in the summer of 1940, when he talked to his chief of the general staff, Franz Halder, on July 22, 1940, to tell him of his intention to move against Russia.² Not much came of this plan at first because the military minds were busy planning a conquest of England. But five months later, a week before Christmas on December 18, 1940, Hitler had reached his decision and framed Directive 21, Fall Barbarossa. With sophomoric simplicity he ordered Russia to be crushed in one rapid campaign with the final objective to form a barrier against Asiatic Russia along the general line from Archangel to the Volga.³

Behind such vague formulations, Hitler's ideological reasons for attacking Russia lay hidden. His grandiose visions of conquest were an integral part

of the ever-present, smoldering impulse to rid himself of rivalrous Jews. Fueled by his craving to gain fame, immortality, and an exalted position in history, he meant to destroy the "Jewish" Bolshevik empire. The inner pressure of these personal needs superseded all rational, military considerations about what would be needed to implement this enormous enterprise. When Hitler demanded that his global visions prevail over the military sense of his generals, he sealed his own fate.

1940

Inadequately prepared for war on such a colossal scale, Hitler unleashed his army nonetheless on June 27, 1941, to launch a gigantic Blitzkrieg with the unrealistic expectation of finishing off Russia in a matter of months. The Wehrmacht spilled into the open spaces of the east without delay, and it looked as if Hitler's dreams were about to be realized. The prospect of a quick victory kept him euphoric. In an elated mood he chatted with his staff about the cosmic dimensions of his future Reich. "I shall no longer be here to see all this," he boasted, "but in twenty years the Ukraine will already be a home for twenty million inhabitants [meaning Germans] as well as natives [referring to Russians]. In 300 years the country will be one of the loveliest gardens in the world."⁴ Fantasies of this nature prevented him from engaging in the necessary careful weighing of all chances of success through a meticulous assessment of the feasibility of his military venture. The momentum of his world-conquering ideas was simply unstoppable and made it impossible for him to resist crossing the threshold to an unforeseeable future.

1941

Hitler's hopes for success had been nurtured as much by the excellent performance of his army in past campaigns as by his self-righteous belief in the providential purpose of his mission. Ideas moved him, not reality. Dictated by his undisguised faith in his own destiny and the irresistible power of his will, Hitler meant to accomplish a miracle against unknown odds, attempting a war that by far exceeded the human dimensions of bravery and heroism or the sheer will to succeed. In his mind he willed victory; therefore it had to happen. To him the Russian war was a human problem; therefore soluble and conquerable. Will power was the answer to overcoming any weaknesses and shortcomings. Such thinking blinded him to any recognition of how much a war against Russia demanded a clear anticipation of the technological limitations of his own war machine to weigh the chances of success in what inevitably would prove to be an impossible task: executing a mind-boggling expedition into unfamiliar expanses to occupy and control the vast territory of Russia.

The fatal underestimation of his opponent had its roots in his racial conception of the Slavic people as being inferior, the *Untermenschen* of the human race unable to cope with the technological demands of modern warfare. Guided by the delusional notion of the superiority and invincibility of the German fighting man and of the technologically superior state of German industry, he assured himself of ultimate victory.

of the ever-present, smoldering impulse to rid himself of rivalrous Jews. Fueled by his craving to gain fame, immortality, and an exalted position in history, he meant to destroy the "Jewish" Bolshevik empire. The inner pressure of these personal needs superseded all rational, military considerations about what would be needed to implement this enormous enterprise. When Hitler demanded that his global visions prevail over the military sense of his generals, he sealed his own fate.

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1940

1941

The ideas in Hitler's mind were the only reality that mattered. With frozen conceptions governing his thinking, the need for a careful assessment of the Soviet Union's industrial and military capabilities under the totalitarian rule of Joseph Stalin was simply overridden. Stalin had seen to it that Russia's huge armament industry was far beyond the reach of Germany's military range.

* Hitler actually held Stalin in high regard, in spite of mutual distrust and immutable resentments. He even called him "a genius"⁵ and admired his organizational talent greatly, thinking him capable of setting distant political goals and pursuing them with tenacity and unerring fervor. Hitler was fully aware of Stalin's industrial mobilization but failed to credit him with being able to anticipate and counteract Hitler's own aggressive designs.⁶

What Hitler said about the Soviet Union in 1924 proved to have little relevance to the state of Soviet military and industrial preparedness in 1941. When Hitler started his misbegotten foray toward the Ural Mountains, he blotted out from his awareness any recognition of Stalin's capabilities, as if the views he had held of the conditions in Russia during the postrevolutionary years were still valid twenty years later.

In assessing Hitler's basic motivation, David Irving said, "The anti-Bolshevik urge, like some Wagnerian motif, continued to inspire his private deliberations, occasionally breaking to the surface in moments of triumphs or repose—much to the consternation of his unready associates."⁷ By feeling compelled to defeat bolshevism without considering current political and military realities, Hitler inevitably became the architect of his own doom.

After Operation Barbarossa was fully underway, the euphoria of history making dissipated rather quickly; within a matter of six months, in fact. The collapse of the Russian campaign came before the siege of Moscow. The debacle signaled the rapid disintegration of Hitler's once-magnificent tool of conquest, his Wehrmacht. His 153 divisions had exhausted themselves in the endless stretches of Russia. They had failed to cope with a merciless climate and sustained incredible losses. Hitler was left with a decimated, dispirited, and overextended army. The means of accomplishing his grandiose plans having been rendered ineffective, he could no longer carry out the strategic ambitions brewing in his mind. His once-proud and once-competent Wehrmacht led by war-hungry professional officers had been wasted in an ill-conceived and ill-prepared venture. His so-called campaign turned into the death march of millions of German soldiers. Hitler paid dearly for failing to take into account the need for obtaining an accurate perception of problems, obstacles, and insurmountable barriers inevitably encountered in such an overambitious endeavor. His unrealistic expectations shattered his army, whose size and efficiency were simply not up to the task at hand.

In spite of the extraordinary heroism of the common soldier fighting for

* D.T. — *Agony, I told him, we'd defeat another genius.*

Hitler's goals, Russia's virtually unlimited human resources alone exceeded whatever Germany was able to muster. Nor had Hitler reckoned with encountering the fierce resistance of Russian soldiers fighting a patriotic war on their own soil. Although he exhorted Germans to make a superhuman effort and mobilized all national resources, his grandiose plan was doomed by Russia's overwhelming size.

The defeat before Moscow in the winter of 1941 was a first mortifying blow and the beginning of many other devastating defeats yet to come. The Disintegration Phase of Hitler's reign had set in. No winter clothing had been issued in time to reach the fighting troops. The wear and tear on mechanized equipment caused by covering enormous distances under grinding operating conditions had been considerably underestimated.⁸ Of the 3.3 million men in the field army attacking Russia, 534,000 were already casualties by September. The winter to follow added another 250,000 cases of frostbite and sickness due to exposure, poor nutrition, and typhus fever. Casualties soared and reached the one-million mark. Hitler ignored the appalling conditions of his troops and clung to his fanciful belief that will power alone would overcome such adversity. His strategy became the strategy of desperation, of heedless risk taking. His throwing all reserves recklessly into battle was perceived by loyal generals as a touch of brilliance instead of the result of the senseless acts of a commander whose only reality was the one in his mind.

41

Neither at this point nor at any thereafter was Hitler able to see how much the steady decline of the army was the result of his own decisions and strategic misconceptions. The devastating defeat before Moscow merely foreshadowed the general unraveling of his entire arsenal of power and exposed the underlying irrationality of his ideological justification for the slaughter.

Blame for the catastrophe was immediately projected onto his generals. He summoned his army commander in chief, Walther von Brauchitsch, on November 28, 1941, and issued outright impossible orders besides venting his wrath about the Moscow disaster on the poor general.¹⁰ Three weeks later von Brauchitsch was unceremoniously relieved of his command and retired. Hitler now decided not to rely any longer on generals and assumed personal control over the entire military effort.

As the war turned from bad to worse, Hitler was unwilling to assume any responsibility for the frightful consequences of his decisions. He soon found fault with all his top commanders and attributed the military disintegration beginning to take place to the betrayal, insubordination, and sabotage of the very men who had served him loyally for years. Within an eight-month time span following the collapse before Moscow, virtually all senior commanders were either sacked, retired, or replaced. Hitler did not shy away from ordinary arrests, court martials, imprisonment, and execution of his generals. "Justice, decency, law and order . . . were now fast disappearing

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from the close and intimate circles of the *Generaliät*." The time was to come shortly when many generals, even field marshals, were under Hitler's or Himmler's orders to be murdered or else condemned to death by especially arranged courts."¹¹ During the war years of 1939-45, 22 generals were condemned to death, 110 committed suicide, and 936 others died or simply vanished from the scene.¹²

The German-Russian war began to deteriorate into a Dantesque nightmare. The fighting at the frontlines collapsed into a war without mercy, simply a barbaric attempt at mutual annihilation, a life-and-death struggle of two competing and incompatible political systems. When Hitler talked with his Rumanian fellow dictator, Marshal Ion Antonescu, early in 1942, he referred to the war as a battle for "existence and nonexistence," admitting that "it is not a war over possession of territory but a struggle for survival."¹³

1942

After the disaster of the winter of 1941-42, Hitler tried again to mobilize whatever armed forces he could muster to defeat the Soviet Union. His rage prompted him to strike at Stalingrad to achieve the triumph that had eluded him a year earlier. This time he seemed to have settled for a symbolic triumph—capturing Stalin's very own city—only to see his hopes for a critical military victory fade rapidly with the annihilation of one of his choice armored units, the ill-fated Sixth Army under the command of General Friedrich von Paulus, who, incidentally, had been responsible for planning Operation Barbarossa (for which he earned the Knight's Cross in May 1942) and who was expected to die gloriously in Stalingrad at his command post.

1943

To add tragedy to tragedy, Hitler's glamorous elite troops in their dashing khaki uniforms, the Afrika Korps, led by the legendary national hero General Erwin Rommel, known to the world as the Desert Fox, were thoroughly defeated and chased out of Africa barely three months after the last remaining units at Stalingrad had surrendered to the Russians, as much as to hunger, lack of ammunition, and the ravages of another merciless Russian winter. A quarter of a million soldiers under General Hans-Jürgen von Arnim surrendered in Tunisia on May 13, 1942. The balance of power had irrevocably tipped in favor of the Allied forces.

Still, Hitler tried once more to seize the initiative by making a desperate attack in the summer of 1943, the Battle of Kursk, known as Operation Citadel, in which he committed virtually the entire available Panzer force at his disposal, 70 percent of the arsenal. Operation Citadel turned into the greatest tank battle in history, a battle in which 3,200 German tanks assaulted well-entrenched defenses in a state of preparation to start their own first-ever summer offensive. Within three weeks it was all over. The German tank forces were wiped out, and their commanders were left with little to command.

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to show strategic initiative and had made this clear on the evening of launching the offensive by issuing a proclamation to his troops: "This strike, which the German forces are about to launch, must be of a decisive importance and bring about a turn of the war. The strike must be the last battle for the victory of German arms."¹⁴

Indeed, it proved to be the last major battle Hitler was able to fight, and it ended up as the third major defeat in as many successive years. It was all downhill from then on at an ever-escalating pace. During the summer and autumn of this same year Hitler's war machine lost another 1.2 million men, not including three-quarters of a million wounded. In total, this was roughly the same amount of manpower lost from the beginning of the war until the loss of the finest men in Stalingrad and Africa. And the year thereafter, 1944, brought further catastrophic destruction with the annihilation of 106 divisions, more than the size of the entire army available at the outbreak of the war in 1939.¹⁵

As supreme commander of the armed forces Hitler was not helped much by having surrounded himself with clones who showed unquestioning obedience to their absolute ruler. They either were blind or ignored their master's fascination for tackling global issues by fusing foreign policy with military conquest. They would not think of questioning his directing a multifront war but accepted him loyally as a leader who had assumed and possessed ultimate authority over everything. They quietly submitted to a man who made sure he had the last word on all military matters, determining strategies and tactics down to the most trivial details.

But the world Hitler thought he could control no longer obeyed him. Following the collapse of his precious army in three critical encounters, the power of his judgment began to decline at a constant pace. Denying the seriousness of his defeats, Hitler lashed out in his characteristic fashion with undiminished fury, like a wounded animal summoning its last strength and vigilance to avoid the inevitable effect of a fatal injury. He lashed out at the entire world, not only at his own generals. In the midst of these alarming developments, he had declared war on the United States of America without consulting his senior officers, while having no idea of how he could possibly defeat this mighty, distant country. His declaration of war on the United States can be seen as a massive outburst of temper designed to force the world to yield to intimidation, as if he could subdue the most formidable enemy through sheer tenacious bullying.

By the time the year 1945 had begun, the German army had suffered 8.3 million casualties in dead, missing, and wounded. After January 30, 1945, the conditions at the eastern front became so chaotic that no one any longer kept track of further casualties.¹⁶ The slaughter finally stopped early in May of that year.

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experience creeping impotence, militarily and politically. In response to an uncontrolled inner rage he meant to regain initiative somehow, and he returned to his lifelong preoccupation: Jews, "the true enemy." Here was one more opportunity not to be missed to seize initiative, fight, and forge ahead with his goal to destroy enemies. The idea of finding a solution, a "final" one, had been smoldering in his mind constantly, sometimes receding quietly, hardly noticeable, sometimes surfacing violently, urgently, to find an avenue to express Hitler's vindictive impulses.

As the war in the east progressed, Hitler brooded over a paradoxical situation: To eliminate Jews he meant to conquer nations; yet the more nations he conquered, the more Jews he had to cope with. Millions and millions of Jews were now behind the German frontline, living as they had been in the heartland in East Poland and Russia. With their presence the Jewish Question took on a new dimension. The "enemy"—the "pest," the "parasites," the "plague"—was now in the midst of his expanding empire more than ever before. In Hitler's suspicious mind, an intolerable situation had arisen. The question of what to do with so many Jews was no longer an abstract issue but a pressing problem in need of a concrete and definite solution. The haphazard policies of removing Jews, practiced up to this point, were in need of a more coordinated approach. Well-defined procedures were discussed and were to become the Final Solution.

The idea of killing Jews was not new. It had always been close to the surface of Hitler's mind. In the crude and vulgar style of a beer hall agitator, Hitler saw Jews as the "foul enemy of mankind" and "a pestilence worse than the black plague."¹⁹ Now the time had come to realize his long-range objective, stated twenty years earlier, when he said, "The National Socialists have the mightiest task to fulfill," by eliminating "the greatest agitators for the complete destruction of Germany."²⁰ MK

From a psychological point of view it is unimportant to determine exactly at what point Hitler had given his orders to start his grisly plan to kill all Jews. But the time came during the Russian campaign when the idea of the Holocaust took shape through formal organizational planning. Hitler saw here a unique chance to exert a massive effort to seize initiative in the vain hope of reversing the misfortunes that had befallen his empire. That his mind was capable of conceiving such an idea can be explained only by assuming that to him, killing Jews had acquired the meaning of serving a "constructive" purpose. It was an act not of wanton savagery but of psychologically motivated behavior. This was his madness. His delusion restored to Hitler a semblance of self-assurance and confidence in his convictions at a time when his world was falling apart and his power disintegrating. By launching the Holocaust, Hitler managed to create for himself the subjective experience of being in control of events once again. Originating a grand-scale action against a "sworn enemy" rekindled his belief in his power

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to exercise strategic initiative. He labeled a group of noncombatant people "enemies" and slated them for annihilation for no other reason than the peculiar image he held of them in his mind.

42 The sadism of Hitler's genocidal thinking was transformed into a meaningful and legitimate war objective. Jews had become as dangerous to the existence of his grand schemes as the soldiers of the Red Army and the tanks and the planes of the Allied forces. Until this point his hatred of Jews had taken the shape of derogation, disdain, and derision. Now he was ready to unleash the brutality through which he could forcefully project his personal animosity. They made him do it, he asserted. He was merely the victim of circumstances who was forced to do something dreadful against his own will. On January 25, 1942, pretending inner agony he told his guests at headquarters, "I see only one solution, absolute extermination, unless they leave on their own." Complaining in a tone of irritation, he added, "Why did the Jews have to start this war anyway?"

Hitler knew full well when he raised this question that five days earlier, on January 20, 1942, the infamous Wannsee Conference had convened in Berlin to permanently seal the fate of Jews. What had been selective and random shooting and experimental use of gassing vans until then was organized upon his orders to become an efficient operation of established extermination factories.

Grant Jews a choice to leave on their own? They had been virtually imprisoned in German-occupied territories for some time without any chance of escape. Ever since the beginning of the assault on Russia in June 1941, Jews had been at the mercy of SS-Einsatzkommandos, who busied themselves with their awful commission to commit mass murder in an unwitting application of Hitler's Pasteur-Koch Complex.

Under his leadership, Germans, Hitler declared, would be the "guardians of the highest values of mankind."²² In his compulsion to help his fellow Germans achieve this lofty aim, he ordered the gruesome tactic of genocide, as if it were a badly needed though unpleasant step in the progress of Western civilization. Such a plan restored reason and plausibility to his own inner turmoil and helped him experience continuity in his ideological thinking. The military disaster had forced him to seek the renewal of his inner strength and somehow to regain faith in the validity of his own ideology. By making the decision to organize the Holocaust, he could feel certain he was consolidating his crucial objective to fight the "Jewish enemy" with all his might, concretely and violently.

During the final phase of the war all distinctions between soldiers and civilians were erased. Guerrilla warfare and the terror bombing of cities had become the permanent features of a savage antagonism aimed at the total, brutal destruction of the enemy. War had turned its participants into vicious demons with a kill-or-be-killed mentality that brought home the terrifying realities of modern warfare. In Hitler's mind, the Holocaust was but

eliminate Jews from their midst. He meant to show how to crush an international conspiracy. In carrying out such plans, he felt sure, the world would be pleased.

When glancing at the model of Linz with riveted attention, Hitler said nothing to show that he understood himself how he had emerged from a childhood filled with fascination for art and architecture only to end up in the grip of an insatiable hatred and a lust to retaliate and destroy. He had no awareness of his plunge into madness.

Hitler killed himself when Russian troops were about to overrun his demolished Reich chancellery. Even in these final moments, in his delusional beliefs in the resurrection of his National Socialist movement, he continued to justify his anti-Semitism as a historically inevitable step to "safeguard culture and civilization." These and similar cliches are his legacy. For he died without expressing a single new idea, without leaving a single original thought to posterity. In a pathetic, whining tone, he repeatedly absolved himself of all guilt for the catastrophe he had wrought over Europe and the world, ending his life with frightening assertions of his innocence. "It is untrue that I or anyone else in Germany wanted this war in 1939,"²⁷ he said, trying in vain to sound convincing. He stayed anchored in the Nazi revolution he grew up to believe in and despised the welfare of the people in whose name he had started that revolution.

Hitler died gripped by an ever-increasing loss of contact with reality. To the end, he believed the tide must turn. With an indomitable will to make a miracle happen at the very last moment, he tried to salvage his dreams of victory by whipping up phantom hopes and flinging weapons of terror—his V-1 and V-2 rockets—at London. Upon the death of U.S. president Franklin D. Roosevelt—in Hitler's eyes "the greatest war criminal in the world"²⁸—on April 12, 1945, Hitler reacted with euphoria, as if the event had been a divine intervention bringing about a historical turning point in his misfortunes. 45

Hitler's mind remained a cauldron of visions and ambitions, of imagery and fantastic schemes. It demonstrated how disturbing ideas and distorting visions can transcend the scope of the creative, inventive, and imaginary power of a normal mind. No one would have doubted that Hitler was mad had he talked and made no sense. But Hitler seemed to make sense. Nonetheless, as rational and logical as Hitler's thoughts might have appeared, one can detect a paranoid structure—paranoid not in a confused and bizarre way, like the twisted thoughts of an outright psychotic person, but in the very style in which a paranoid thinks, reasons, and sets objectives and goals. Yet with his ability to project rationality, Hitler obtained support from his fellow Germans who believed they had found in Hitler a leader addressing their fundamental human need for hope, a need tragically blotting out any awareness of the possibility of national self-destruction.

One has to wonder what went on in Hitler's mind as he contemplated

ture career strengthened by thoughts of what lay ahead. I felt no real doubts about Hitler's leadership until the war was launched in 1939, and even then it took until the end of the tragic clash of my country with the rest of the world before I was finally able to see the frightening extent of oppression and terror that had surrounded me all those years.

The visit to my imprisoned father in the spring of 1945 became a crucial turning point in my own mind. Seeing his courage to stand up for his convictions made me aware of the necessity for active resistance. His one long talk with Agnes and me, explaining as it did the process of his own disillusionment, accelerated my own disillusionment.

The flood of information after the war made me aware of the extent of my abysmal ignorance about the world. When the guns stopped blazing in 1945 I still thought the Japanese were fighting at Pearl Harbor, and I had never heard of the Battle of Midway nor of Eva Braun, for that matter. I grew resentful about the years of deception and misinformation in which I had had to do my growing up. I began to search for a new beginning, for more enduring values, and for new convictions and a new outlook. I turned my back on a certain portion of my past in order to discover the way life really was. To me emigration was the only meaningful way to find something to replace the world of the Nazis.

Whenever I return to Europe now, some forty years after my life in Hitler's Germany—return to enjoy the cultural diversity of a continent rich in traditions, customs, and languages—I find my suppressed memories of the past jarred into awareness, especially when I visit Krefeld, the town where I was born and had spent my boyhood. I was surprised that after so many years it was not at all difficult to remember how things had really happened and that the past had not disappeared altogether.

I hold a specific affection in my heart for the places of my childhood. Krefeld had given me many happy memories, all lying outside the world the Nazis tried to mold. This old Krefeld had been a beautiful city, and I was proud of its long history reaching back to the days of the Roman Empire. But the Krefeld of old was wiped out in one long night, on June 22, 1943, when 700 bombers of the Allied Strategic Air Command discharged their deadly cargo at the height of Hitler's war. The air raid with all its dreadful consequences for so many citizens, including my family, imprinted my mind with the images of wartime horror and violence. These images of destruction blotted out the happy memories of my carefree childhood.

By the time this terror happened, I had been in the Wehrmacht for over a year and had just graduated from the Hannover Officer-Training School and was waiting to be assigned to a frontline unit in Russia. As was the practice in the army, soldiers whose hometowns were bombed were granted a one-week leave of absence. In fearful anticipation of the worst possible

news about my family, I took the train to Krefeld. From a distance I saw a huge, dirty cloud hanging low over a desert of destruction. The skyline was changed beyond recognition. Familiar landmarks had disappeared. The steeple of the Friedenskirche, the Church of Peace, right around the corner from where I lived, stood burned out, an eerie skeleton starkly visible.

413 I walked streets filled with shapeless mounds of rubble. It was strange to see people alive amidst these ruins. Everywhere they were digging into collapsed basements in the hope of salvaging whatever precious possessions had escaped the fire. Here and there a house was left standing, surrounded by smoldering ruins with ugly smoke slowly rising from what had once been prosperous homes. Seeing them kindled my hope that my house might have been spared. Here, in one stroke of a vengeful act of war, the hub of Germany's silk and velvet industry had been obliterated.

Feeling numb I stood in front of the empty brick facade of the house where I used to live on the Elizabethstrasse, all reduced to rubble. Searching for some sign or a message from my family, my eyes discovered chalk marks scribbled on the burned-out foundation next to the front door: "All alive! Are at Aunt Martha's." That was four miles toward the Rhine River in the neighboring town of Uerdingen. My mother and my sisters were alive—nothing else mattered. The joy of seeing them again transcended the grief over the loss of all possessions.

At this time in the middle of Hitler's vicious war, I thought I was looking at the work of Germany's unyielding enemies. What I did not realize then was that my severe bitterness was directed at the wrong target, toward those nations I believed meant to bring total destruction to my country. At this point none was directed at Germany's morally corrupt leadership.

A few weeks later, in a depressed mood, I was on the train to the eastern front in Russia. Passing through Berlin and Warsaw and the rest of Poland, I entered the expanses of Russia. Slowly I traveled deeper and deeper into a strange and foreign land I had been told was posing a mortal threat to the existence of the German people.

I was a twenty-one-year-old lieutenant with 120 days of training in infantry warfare who suddenly found himself commander of a company, a small miserable group of men, shrunk by incessant fighting to the size of eighty soldiers, one sargeant, and one corporal, all knowing much more about fighting with a rifle than I did. My depression did not lift when I learned that the life expectancy of a frontline officer was three weeks. By that time I would be either dead or wounded. It did not really matter much any longer; I had no home to return to anyway, nor was there any use to dream about ever having a good future.

I considered myself most lucky to have lasted five weeks before a bullet tore into my right lung. The war was finally over for me. I knew I was alive and would get away from the inhuman conditions of frontline warfare—conditions that no animal would tolerate. There had been no chance to

bury the dead who died that day, no chance to wash up or change clothes. We slept on the ground in our filthy, torn uniforms and gulped down one warm meal a day. The daily skirmishes with Russians pressing hard were exhausting. Getting sick or wounded was a blessing.

In the field hospital my chronic state of exhaustion gradually ended. No more nightly retreats of twenty or thirty miles. During six months of surgery, medical treatment, and recuperation while enjoying a bed with white linen and being cared for by matronly, overworked nurses, I finally found time to rest and read, a time to think and reflect on the meaning of it all: What had happened to my country and to me, and how it was all supposed to be.

I had already given some thought to these matters haphazardly during the steady retreat in Russia following the defeat of the German Panzers in the gigantic tank battle of Kursk. We had been on the run since then, and I had often caught myself staring at the endless stretches of the Russian land and wondering what I was doing there in the midst of nowhere, several thousand miles on foot away from my homeland, which I might never see again. My existence had been reduced to a basic, primitive desire to survive, to cling to life itself, somehow.

During my slow recovery in the unaccustomed luxury of a hospital, I preoccupied myself with the nagging question: Does Hitler or anyone in Berlin or in the German High Command actually know what he is doing? There was much discussion among wounded and crippled soldiers, but they were unwilling to accept defeat and clung to their belief that tenacity would be rewarded and eventually bring victory. Few saw the madness behind the course of events.

In these days of a slow awakening of a critical attitude, I began to question the vision of a Greater Germany as Hitler had portrayed it in so many flaming speeches. Watching the war effort collapse and seeing soldiers plagued by a sense of futility, despair, and revulsion, stubbornly and stoically waiting out the war, I could not find sense in Hitler's teaching of a *Weltanschauung* designed to be a beacon for humankind and a blueprint to shape a new order of the world. The abysmal decline of what was once my proud country had happened so quickly, so unexpectedly, so mercilessly. And yet what could possibly take the place of the prewar days of torchlights, marching bands, swastika flags, and pride in defying the rest of the world? Nothing crystalized in my mind to enable me to replace simplistic propaganda messages with anything I had learned or knew. Not knowing how to combat my ignorance about the world outside Germany, I grew frustrated and angry.

In my sweeping search for some kind of understanding of how it all happened, I at first focused only on select images of pedestrian as well as unpleasant encounters with Nazi bureaucracy, hardly any of which enabled me to form a well-integrated conviction of what the world beyond Nazi

Germany had to offer. Nor could I even imagine what the non-German world looked like. I only remembered having been fascinated by the spectacular times.

One memory, though, came back again and again, hauntingly: the image of the burning of the synagogue in Krefeld, less than a year before the war had started and just two weeks after I had turned sixteen. The day was November 9, 1938 a day that was to enter the history books as the Kristallnacht, the night of broken glass. It was six weeks before Christmas.

238 I recall hearing fire engines racing down the Uerdingerstrasse during the early morning hours. The high-pitched tone of their bells was electrifying and made me want to storm out of the house to see a big fire, never mind school. I had never seen a fire, and this was my chance. On the spur of the moment I decided to run toward the center of town where I heard the faint sounds of the bells dying down. Fire engines from the surrounding communities had converged in the downtown section where the streets were narrow and crooked. I wanted to see a big fire but also wanted to see firefighters in action, going to work in combating a blaze. I was not the only one rushing; there were many people strangely excited and eager to learn what had happened. The synagogue was on fire. It was an imposing structure on the corner of Peterstrasse and Marktstrasse.

By the time I arrived, the great central tower of the temple of the Jews was engulfed in flames and thick smoke bellowed from the four onion-shaped towers on each corner. The firefighters had been able to drive their engines close to the fire, but I did not see any of them hustling to get their equipment ready. Irritated by such laziness, I watched them standing around chatting, apparently unalarmed. One of them turned his back and lit a cigarette. Finally, they began to move the ladders into position, but they did so in a leisurely fashion. I grew frantic not seeing anyone springing into action in response to the emergency, as I had expected.

A huge trailer belonging to a local moving company had been parked on top of the manhole cover of the underground hydrant nearby. A policeman inspected it. Noting with much care its license plate, he pulled a pad of paper from the breast pocket of his uniform, licked his pencil, and wrote down the registration number. But no one made any effort to push the bulky trailer to clear an access to the hydrant.

The fire grew hungrier and larger, so menacing that it was now engulfing the entire roof. Dirty smoke forced its way from the eaves and upper-story windows. A big roar inside the building signaled that something terrible was about to happen. Then noisily the roof of the big tower came thundering down stirring up black clouds that gushed out of the gaping, empty windowframes below. Glowing sparks and hot ashes thrust skyward by collapsing beams and brick walls were now raining down onto the street. Startled, the people hastily backed away.

The crowd had grown dense. Some people stared in fear, some talked in

a tone of grotesque excitement. The trailer had been pushed aside, finally, and the hoses were connected. Then I saw the firefighters beginning to spray the neighboring buildings to prevent the fire from spreading. It was said to be necessary because the blaze was out of control. The temple was just left to burn to the ground.

On my way home, I saw several black-uniformed SS men smashing the windows of a Jewish delicatessen. The protesting storekeeper made a vain effort to resist. He was forcefully pushed aside and thrown to the pavement. Nobody tried to stop the handful of vandalizing men. The old Jewish man on the pavement was finally assisted and led to safety. I felt hypnotized by the strangeness of the situation. As I watched the horror scene, my thoughts were racing, some in utter fear of the meaning of it all, some in anger over my own helplessness. I had never thought about such things before because they had never had any particular significance in my life until that moment, when I watched people turning on other people because they were different. 38

I had not been prepared for the shock of suddenly suspecting that the events I had witnessed were not accidental. The Nazi movement had always espoused the message that Germans had a special calling and were imbued with special gifts; that message now sounded artificial.

During and right after the war I thought about what I had witnessed and was startled, as I am sure anybody would be, at the ability of one's mind to retain such memories of the past in all their clarity amidst the accumulation of the endless number of other, undifferentiated experiences that have rushed into one's mind over a lifetime. This was one such experience, well remembered. November 9, 1938.

The day of the fire was capped by a long talk with my father. He was preoccupied with his preparations for his move to Berlin to start his government position and had already traveled twice to the capital and had already rented an apartment. Before he had become so preoccupied with the changes in his life, we had talked with each other a great deal, mostly on Sunday mornings on long walks through the nearby Stadtwald. His words were never badgering, but always a bit didactic and meant to be pedagogical. It seemed hardly to matter to me, for I always learned a lot from him. I could not fully fathom his visions of Germany as deserving a place under the sun, as does any other great nation, and his view of Germany as deserving a better recognition for its fine ancient heritage. I respected his opinions; after all, I loved him. He was so much older than I, knew so much more, and had read so many books. I cannot recall having read at that time any book from cover to cover. Father always sounded so secure, so firmly convinced he knew exactly what he was doing. As for me, I did not fully understand about fanaticism, ideology, concentration camps, and the type of people in Berlin who were running the country. 1938

There we talked again, this time about the burning of the synagogue

two days before, by a seventeen-year-old Polish Jew named Herschel Grynszpan. I listened to the resolve of top Nazi leaders to declare outright war on Jews. Since Father rarely talked about Jews, I now learned more about his thoughts than I ever knew before. His ideas stayed with me for a long time until they were altered years later by my ever-growing desire to form independent opinions and rely on the critical assessment of my own observations.

In talking about the sacking and burning of stores and the temple, announced over the radio with a sense of pride in the ability of Germans to show collective retaliation, my father did not want his faith in Hitler shaken. He fixed blame outright on the excesses of overzealous storm troopers. He spoke with anxious trust in his beliefs as a practicing Nazi. Although not possessed by any stirring hatred of Jews, he couched his feelings toward them in subtle, philosophical-historical arguments in which he sounded rational and logical, yet he was visibly struggling with a desire to show unquestioning loyalty to Hitler as his leader rather than reliance on his own assessment. He pointed to the necessity of all Germans to pull together and, for the sake of the country, to submit all individual opinions and convictions to the collective will of Hitler's leadership. Hitler alone was able to define the national purpose. The official position was not to regard Jews as Germans. He then shared with me his belief in the Aryan mystique of the "good Germans" whose mission it was to save the Western world from encroaching decadence and decay. In retrospect, I can recognize how much such thoughts were influenced by his reading of Oswald Spengler's prophetic volume *The Decline of the West*, published at the end of the First World War in 1923. To Father, Spengler's was a truly monumental analysis of Western culture with an implicit challenge to stave off impending doom and to reverse the course of destiny itself.

As a boy I was still starry-eyed about my father's interpretation of Hitler's great design for Germany. He admired Hitler for having brought a dramatic improvement in the quality of daily life for every German within an incredibly short period, a feat unparalleled in German history. But I cannot recall his ever anticipating the disaster that was to strike within a year's time. He apparently had no awareness of how much the momentum of the hateful feelings of the Nazi movement would carry Germany toward the outbreak of war. My father saw Hitler as an emissary of God, and whenever there is a god there is a devil, he said. To the Nazis the Jews were the devil. Karl Marx had called for the destruction of the existing world, whereas Hitler was calling for its restoration—it was as simple as that.

The anti-Semitic outburst during the Kristallnacht must be seen as no more than an embarrassing mishap of an otherwise pure and idealistic movement aimed at containing Jewish influence. Father explained. The real issue was defeating Jewish bolshevism. Once this goal was accomplished, the individual Jew in Germany would be able to live as a regular

citizen among Germans and would have to worry no longer. The synagogues would be rebuilt, and German Jews would live peacefully once more.

Such talk added to my confusions. I was expected to make distinctions I was not able to make. My father explained away the violence of the Kristallnacht and failed to see the tragedy as unjust and inhumane. I had seen people victimized by other people, and yet he tried to assure me as if we were living in normal times. He talked of revolution. I had never been in one and did not know what to expect. My father explained that the Nazi revolution was like an overwhelming act of nature, like a tidal wave or an earthquake, and this could explain why there was such a sudden outburst of the German people against the Jews.

He viewed Jews as being different from Germans because they did not share the age-old dream of all German-speaking people to live one day under one roof called Greater Germany. They do not need our roof, he said, because they have a roof of their own: their own religion and their history. Consequently, they are like foreigners living as guests in Germany. Because of their own culture and use of their own language, they have loyalties that would never permit them to become good Nazis, as all Germans sooner or later would become. My father was seriously convinced that Germans were not against Jews, but that Jews were unhappy with Germans. He was convinced that Hitler actually meant to treat them well by helping Jewish families to leave the country so that they might find their happiness somewhere else. All this he said without showing any doubts in his convictions.

The concept of anti-Semitism was foreign to me and was not part of my vocabulary. No one I knew would acknowledge prejudice in those terms. Nationalistic pride was valued highly and served to justify the resentment of minorities. It was fostered, not stifled, and in fact allowed to take destructive forms. My father never suggested that Jews should suffer, but his conviction that Jews could not be expected to become part of the culturally and historically Christian Germany was a prejudice, blind and dangerous, as I eventually began to see it.

As a boy I wished I had the capacity to act and do something about people turning on helpless people. The Kristallnacht was my first conscious experience of living in a country in which human considerations were bypassed and in which guilt or shame over the events was covered up by emotional fervor about national virtues and selective deviation from the noble cause of a National Socialist revolution. I do not recall anyone giving much thought to the fate of the victims, the Jewish people.

Hitler's image as a "good" leader of the German nation had been carefully groomed, obscuring the fact that his conscience had abnormal guideposts. It took long years before my father's loyalty to this man was tem-

pered. By then my father was at the height of his career as a Nazi official working in Berlin. The general public, similarly, was not able to see clearly for a long time how Hitler failed to distinguish between what is humane and what is evil, when all along Hitler had been operating in a moral vacuum, calling it his destiny.

I have attempted to show the driving forces of the obsessional and delusional ideas that placed Hitler outside the realm of normal functioning. His ideas mirror mental disturbance, not mistakes in judgment, as has been implied or suggested.¹ He made his decisions on the basis of personal beliefs, constantly reinforced by his conviction in their absolute validity. He followed the dictates of his inner calling with a programmatic stubbornness unmatched by any national leader in modern times. The rigidity of his mental set was perceived as providing the German nation with a sense of purpose. In admiring Hitler's will power, my parents' generation blinded themselves to the potentially disastrous consequences of his decisions and failed to see the unbridled hatred aimed at containing and eliminating Jews. They failed to see that sooner or later this type of leadership would plunge the world into primitive savagery.

But why the Jews? This question deserves scrutiny. Jews were Hitler's lifelong obsession. I was startled reading the opinion of his youthful friend Gustl Kubizek, who said about Hitler as a teenager: "His accumulated hatred of all forces which threatened the Germans was mainly concentrated on Jews. . . . Choking with his catalogue of hates, he would pour his fury over everything, against mankind in general which did not understand him, which did not appreciate him, and by whom he was persecuted."² Hitler was in the grip of raking visions; "it was as though a demon had taken possession of him."³ In this sense the Holocaust has its roots in Hitler's paranoid preoccupations, which were already observable in his youth. The plan to kill Jews thus became an inevitable consequence of his lifelong delusional thinking.

This aspect of Hitler's personality was very evident to his male followers in campaign speeches early in his career. Yet these men were not appalled. In the grip of the trauma of the experiences of the First World War, the Lost Generation tried to reenter civilian life without comprehending how much the brutality of their war had given them social signals that inextricably confused their minds. They were still haunted by memories of years of leading a debased life, suffering injuries, tolerating violent death, and seeing dreadful mutilations. The war was over, but war novels and war movies made these veterans relive the explosions and bombings, always serving as a reminder of the cruelty of the enemy.

To Hitler, Jews were the enemy, and he never allowed the memory of war to die down. He needed the fighting spirit of soldiers to shape his own future and stirred their minds with an ideology glorifying toughness, aggression, and bravery as the most noble expressions of human nature. He

1906

addressed the members of the Lost Generation with the constant admonition to heed the evil intentions of the other side. With his steady barraging of their senses, his brown-shirted storm troopers made violence an integral part of daily life. It seemed that a whole population became desensitized to suffering and pain. Life itself was defined as a violent process.

The war experiences had caused a psychic numbness in which any feeling of connectedness with other human beings was lost and, with it, the essential human qualities of empathy and guilt and of shame and responsibility. Toughness was advertised to Brownshirts as a mark of masculinity. Hitler made violence even more acceptable to them by appointing them as guardians of the social well-being of German society.

This is the best way I can explain my father's indifference—and that of most Germans—toward the brutality of the Kristallnacht. In his talk with me he did not show much perspective on the misfortunes suffered by Jews. All was rationalized as if the event was but part of the turmoil of the times. Listening to Hitler's threats to harm Jews did not trigger any fear for their ultimate safety. The idea of the physical destruction of Jews was inconceivable then.

In spite of Hitler's vulgar harangues against the Jewish enemy, Germans somehow never understood the long-range implications of Hitler's hatred until their worst fears were confirmed at the end of the Second World War. In the short time Hitler was able to influence Germans to gain their support, he succeeded in bringing them back to an ancient tribal conception of their nation, a *völkisch* community, as if Germans should see themselves as a cluster of Teutonic tribes in which rivalry, vengeance, and hatred were driving forces. He meant to bring a new sense of unity to their tribal organization by falling back on the dangerous conception of racial superiority of all Germanic people who needed but one leader to lift them out of their misery. With intoxicating oratory he dressed up the promises of a good future in the mystical notions of Blut und Boden (blood and soil) close to the center of Teutonic gravity and Wagnerian operas.

1918

Whenever I visit my native town—now rebuilt and all new—and go to see my old high school, sad memories are evoked. From all I can determine, only five of my former classmates returned from the war. The rest are dead. A new generation of young Germans now sit on the same old benches in my classrooms. When I walked the familiar hallways and talked to them and their young teachers, I found myself uplifted by how much their thoughts, their bearing, and their outlook were so refreshingly different from that of my own generation, who shared the same struggle with academic challenges over fifty years ago. I talked to these new Germans. They looked and dressed and acted like teenagers in any other country, certainly not much different from American youth, whom they idolize and imitate. Their openness was refreshing when I heard their ideas and their

ing the Second World War, the spirit of Versailles was supplanted by a spirit of cooperation. The deep anger and resentment among Germans at the humiliating conditions of the Versailles Treaty blatantly aiming at stifling any economic growth was totally different from the quiet gratitude shown for the magnanimity of the victors in 1945, who kindled Germany's economic and political recovery through the provisions of the Marshall Plan.

1919 The message of democracy in 1918 had been outright muddled, causing a serious delay in the process by which Germans would try to redefine their national existence. Versailles placed a damper on German hopes of finding fulfillment through commitment to a democratic form of government. At that time, democracy was seen as the practice of hypocrisy; for peace proved to mean vengeance, and promises covered up duplicity. The Treaty of Versailles thus provided the soil on which the weed of nazism grew.

These short-sighted mistakes were avoided in 1945, but one major decision of the victor nations did delay the introduction of democracy in the eastern part of Europe. Germany's integrity as one nation was temporarily sacrificed in the belief that future peace would be assured by creating a division into a Western German Federal Republic and an Eastern German Democratic Republic. In hindsight, this decision can be viewed as a blessing in disguise. In Western Germany the political traditions of Western Europe were given a chance to be put to work, whereas East Germany permitted its own adoption by Moscow's then-monolithic empire and made itself an integral part of the Communist Eastern European bloc for over forty more years. In the West, as a result of the decline of narrow-minded and chauvinistic feelings toward Germans by their former enemies, Germans became receptive to the political and economic model of Western nations. West Germans left war making behind and discovered new hopes in the commitment to practice democracy.

They embraced, especially, the example set by Americans, who were capitalistic and free. By far the most productive nation, its civil liberties second to none, with a free-enterprise system affording its citizens an unrivaled standard of living, the United States became the role model. A major social transformation occurred in Germany. Germans liked what they learned from the United States—a formidable former adversary that proved to be generous and supportive. After many generations, preoccupation with militaristic and imperialistic concepts—the idea of a world-dominating Reich—had been abandoned at last.

Following the total collapse of Hitler's Reich, no voices are heard any longer evoking Germany's historical past or any images of ethnic and cultural superiority; no voices trying to touch something deep in the German soul; no political attempts to make a metaphysical connection with Germany's Teutonic past by appealing to any repressed desire to restore the former glory of an imperial nation. There are no more spectacular, uniformed celebrations or annual festivals in Nuremberg, or any other city for