

1: Eros Awakes

THE OTHER boys at the Gymnasium in Rheydt's Augusta Strasse, which Goebbels entered at Easter 1908, regarded him as a sneak and know-all.¹ He ingratiated himself with teachers, particularly with the scripture teacher Father Johannes Mollen, by telling on his truant comrades. 'My comrades,' he would confess, 'never liked me, except for Richard Flisges.'² He would find Flisges in the upper fifth (Obersekunda) in 1916. His closest friends were three 'Herberts'—Hompesch, Beines, and Lennartz.³ Herbert Lennartz, son of his father's boss, died after a minor operation, leaving Goebbels grief-stricken and shocked. It moved him to compose his first poem ('Why did you have to part from me so soon?').⁴

At first he was lazy and apathetic, numbed by the realization of his physical deformity. Then he overcompensated, and later he was never far from the top of the class. His love of Latin came falteringly at first, then in full flood. With biting irony and sarcasm Christian Voss tutored him in German literature—and in sarcasm and irony as well. While his brothers Hans and Konrad had to leave school early, Joseph excelled.⁵ With clenched fists and gleaming eyes young Goebbels listened as history teacher Dr Gerhard Bartels taught his class about Germany's checkered past.⁶ His father and mother wanted him to become a priest—not just because the church would then pay for his higher education; they were a deeply religious family. When Joseph's little sister Elisabeth died in 1915 they all knelt around her deathbed and held hands and prayed for her soul.⁷ Joseph composed another poem for her, 'Sleep, baby, sleep.'

When the Great War came in August 1914 his friends all rallied, excitedly to the Kaiser's colors; he too went to the local recruiting office, but the officer dismissed him with barely a glance. Back at school he wrote a thoughtful essay, 'How can a non-combatant help the fatherland in these times?' He argued in it that 'even those who are denied the right to shed their blood for the honor of the nation' could be of service, 'even if not in such a creditable way.' His teacher marked it 'Good.'⁸

The classroom emptied as the war dragged on. His pals Hubert Hompesch and Willy Zilles, now fusiliers, wrote him exciting letters from the western front.⁹ His brother Konrad was a gunner and Hans was soon in French captivity.¹⁰ As author of the best essay, Goebbels, now in the upper sixth (Oberprima), had the honor of delivering the valedictory speech when school ended on March 21, 1917. He spoke of Germany's

'global mission' to become 'the political and spiritual leader of the world.'¹¹ 'Very good,' the headmaster Dr Gruber told him. 'But mark my words, you'll never make a good orator!'¹²

After passing the school-certificate examination at Easter 1917 Goebbels again tried to enlist, but was accepted only for a few weeks' service as a pen pusher at the Reichsbank. His painful deformity had thus given him at least one advantage, a head start on his later comrades in the political battle. He would already be at university while Adolf Hitler, Hermann Göring, and Rudolf Hess were fighting under the skies of Flanders.

His intellectual horizon was expanding. In 1909 his father had purchased secondhand a piano, that symbol of the solid middle class; the family and neighbors clustered round as four furniture-men manhandled the piano indoors. Joseph rapidly mastered the instrument. He also developed a talent for play-acting and mime. But what was to become of him now? The priesthood? Goebbels inclined briefly toward medicine but Voss, his teacher, persuaded him that his real talents lay in literature. Whichever the subject, the university at Bonn it would be.

1930 | JOSEPH Goebbels reaches puberty at about thirteen. But given his later reputation it is worth emphasizing that he will be thirty-three before he first has sexual intercourse with a woman.¹³ For the intervening twenty years this brilliant but celibate cripple's life will be a trail of temptation, near-seductions, and sexual rebuffs etched into his memory. At thirteen he and his pal Herbert Beines have a grubby mudlark of a friend, Herta Harperscheidt, whose stepmother Therese always wears crisp, clean skirts; so Joseph Goebbels recalls fourteen years later. The sexual attraction that he first detects towards this mature female returns when he is fifteen. He harbors secret crushes on women like Frau Lennartz, the factory owner's wife. All of his pals have girlfriends—Hompesch has one engagingly called Maria Jungbluth. Goebbels however senses only a 'distant yearning' as Eros awakes in him.

'My libido is sick,' he will write aged twenty-six. 'In affairs of the heart we humans are all scandalously selfish. For the phallus we sacrifice the hecatombs of immortal souls.'¹⁴ Basking in what he sees as one woman's love he will reflect, 'I am everything to her.... Or am I allowed to see life's treasures more intensely because I am doomed to depart it early on? Now and again I have this premonition!'¹⁵

At age eighteen, in 1915, he begins a three-year infatuation with a local girl, Lene Krage. He calls it love, and will long recall their chaste kiss in Garten Strasse. But she is capricious and flighty, and his tormented soul drives him to the time-honored refuge of writing a private diary. At Christmas 1916 he sends her a book of his own poetry. Leaving Rheydt for Bonn university in March 1917 he says farewell to Lene. They find themselves locked in Kaiser Park that night, and he kisses her breast for the first time: Characterizing this milestone event seven years later he writes coyly, 'She becomes a loving woman for the first time

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will become clear that he means this only in the broadest sense.

HE was to study philology, Latin, and history. Desperately lonely, he lodged in a cold bare room. His aspirations were overshadowed by hunger, cold, fatigue, and ill-health. He had made one good friend in the law student Karlheinz Kölsch however and fagged for him as the *Leibfuchs* (freshman valet) in the tradition of all medieval universities. 'Pille' Kölsch, as he was known, remained his foppish, loud-voiced, jovial, staunch friend and rival long after their careers had drifted apart. With his modish headgear and yellow gloves, Kölsch became his first role-model.¹⁶ He roped Goebbels into the tiny Bonn chapter ('Sigfridia') of the catholic fraternity Unitas on May 22, 1917.¹⁷ Its half-dozen members spent the weekly meetings solemnly debating religion and quaffing beer in the local hostelry, the Cockerel. Goebbels had chosen the classical name of Ulex for himself.¹⁸

His funds ran out, which scarcely mattered as at the end of July 1917 he was briefly inducted into war service, and absolved his obligations by pushing a pen for a few weeks in a home auxiliary service (he wrote an excellent copperplate script). He was keen to continue at university, but his father could put up only fifty marks per month; Joseph earned a little more by tutoring. He frittered away that summer with Lene on vacation, spending at least one chaste night with her on her sofa at Rheindahlen, and committing to his memory that she 'stayed pure.' He left a number of unpaid bills at Bonn, which his father settled.

The winter semester began on October 1, 1917. He submitted a formal application to the diocese in Cologne, where the Albertus Magnus Society provided aid to promising young catholics. The documents¹⁹ supporting his application show that his father now earned 3,800 to 4,000 marks per annum, and had no liquid assets. His scripture teacher Mollen testified:

'Herr Goebbels comes from decent catholic parents and deserves commendation for his religious fervor and his general moral demeanor.'

Father Mollen would explain years later that he furnished this testimonial with the clearest conscience: 'He was a very promising scholar. For *nine* years he had taken scripture lessons from me and had always shown much interest, comprehension, and devotion. He regularly attended school church services and the monthly Communion. His attitude to me was confident, proper, and reverential.' The parish priest at Rheydt seconded him. Backed by these documents, Goebbels humbly submitted on September 5, 1917 his application to the Diocesan Committee of the Albertus Magnus Society for financial support for the winter term 1917-18.

'Because of a lame foot I am exempt from military service,' he wrote, 'and I should dearly like to continue my studies next term.'

Convinced that his was a worthy cause, the society sent him 185 marks

6 I: THE HATER OF MANKIND

as a first interest-free installment of a loan finally totaling 964 marks. His address was now given as No. 18 Post Strasse in Bonn; he would return there in October 1917.

BY the time of his final Ph.D. examination in November 1921 he would have attended five different universities; this was not unusual in Germany. The reasons are obscure: sometimes he was pursuing a particular subject, sometimes a certain professor, sometimes a special course; frequently the lack of lodging space in one city decided that he should study elsewhere that term instead.

His speaking talents were already developed. Hompesch told him he was a born orator. 'Motor mouth!' joked Kölsch's brother Hermann in one letter. 'There you go, shooting it off again. Well, there's nobody to touch you on that score.' 'We really ought to open a stall,' Hermann joked in a letter two weeks later, 'and do the rounds of the church fairs displaying you as the Man with the All-Round Mouth.'²⁰

Goebbels stayed on in Bonn after term ended on February 1, then moved into Kölsch's lodgings in Wessel Strasse. The April 1918 issue of the *Unitas* journal reported that the two friends, by now inseparable, had decided to study next in Berlin.

AT CHRISTMAS Goebbels discovers his pal's sister Agnes Kölsch, and his yearning for Lene turns to aversion. Agnes visits him one day and they exchange one passionless kiss on his sofa. She foolishly introduces him to her sister Liesel, and an informal triangle develops lasting well into the new year. Agnes visits him in Bonn, and they spend the night together—'Ulex' kisses her breasts. After this he spends weekends at Kölsch family home at Werl, except once when Liesel her sister comes to Bonn and Agnes is all but forgotten.²¹ Goebbels recalls having been considerate to her, but he congratulates himself, with a certain smugness, 'She is all over me.' Mrs Kölsch encourages Goebbels' relationship with Agnes, although his immaturity is painfully evident.²² 'She is still a child, he adds in his own writings. 'We are both children.'

Pille Kölsch meanwhile has dropped Berlin and opted for Freiburg in south-western Germany; Ulex sets off in his comrade's footsteps for summer term beginning in May 1918. At Freiburg Pille embraces him with his eyes gleaming. 'Ulex!' he announces, 'I've already found this girl. Anka Stalherm. She's a student—you've got to meet her.' ('And I have done just that!' writes Goebbels six years later, still besotted with Anka.)

Female students are in 1918 still rarities at German universities, and Anka is a rarity among these. She is reading economics. She wears blonde hair long with a few strands caught up in a knot on top;²³ her ankles are slim, and her legs are rumored to be equally divine. She is twenty-three, two years older than Goebbels. With her Ursuline convent education in Germany and England behind her, she has inherited class

beauty, and wealth as well—her late father owned a distillery and cornmill in the Rhineland.²⁴

Kölsch and Goebbels become friendly rivals for Anka's affections. Among her effects will later be found a faded picture postcard showing Goebbels at some student revelry wearing a lampshade on his head.²⁵ Pille has penned a fond message on the back. And yet—let this be made clear in advance—sexually, Goebbels will get nowhere with her; nor she with him.²⁶

Since Anka is a regular at Professor Hermann Thiersch's seminars on classical archeology, Goebbels signs on for them too. Glowing reports reach the charity in Cologne about his interest in these three-hour lectures. And the miracle happens: Anka Stalherm, this goddess of the mysterious gray-green eyes, she who is coveted by half the males at Freiburg university, saves her smiles for when he walks in, or so it seems to him. She is fascinated by this swift intellect. They go out as a threesome for strolls up Freiburg's Castle Hill or into the Black Forest. Kölsch suffers torments of jealousy, which enhances Goebbels' sense of triumph. He serenades Anka on a rented piano, and one precious night he sleeps under the same Black Forest roof as her. The three students tour the sleepy towns along the shores of Lake Constance, with Goebbels dreamy-eyed in blissful anticipation.

Oppressing him despite these carefree moments are his poverty and his own jealousy when she spends days away with Kölsch. His 'uncle' Heinrich Cohnen, a wealthy insurance-director friend of his father's, twice wires loans to him. The catholics are less forthcoming. While the *Unitas* journal reports the unexpected revival of their Freiburg chapter thanks to Ulex and his pal, after August 1918 Goebbels' name vanishes from its pages altogether.

The delicious pursuit of the coquettish Anka continues. Goebbels serenades her on the piano but ascertains that she is, alas, 'chastity itself.'

His first letter to her is dated June 15, 1918, a wordy, Latin-garnished, solemn epistle addressing her formally as *sehr geehrtes Fräulein* Stalherm, embellished with four lines of carefully crafted verse and signing off 'with quite a lot of greetings, yours faithfully, J. Goebbels—Ulex.'²⁷ Persistence and intellect are rewarded. Up on Castle Hill one afternoon—it is June 28, 1918—he kisses her for the first time:²⁸ not on the lips, but on one cheek.²⁹ There is a problem: She is of far higher pedigree. There is an unholy row when she does not invite him to meet her visiting brother Willy. And he agonizes over her dalliances with Kölsch: which does she prefer? One evening she pleads with him on bended knee to declare *his* love for her, and he realizes that women too can suffer.

As she leaves Freiburg at the end of July 1918 after one last night of stifled passion, he visits their old haunts. He sits in the forest hut high above the university city, listening to the rain beating on its roof, and imagines himself all alone on earth. He begins to compose a five-act play, 'Judas Iscariot.'³⁰

As the Freiburg term ends he dreams of moving to Munich, but the

Acen

lack of lodgings there thwarts him and he returns home. During summer vacation he exchanges scores of letters with Anka, sometimes twice a day. His letters to her reveal a young man still physically frail and lonely; they suggest that he has elected to enter the church. Romance Anka occupies every other waking hour. His catchword is *wahnsinnig* crazy: That is what he is, he confesses, about her. He scrawls that word in the corner of letters, or leaves it unfinished just as *waaa*. He is untroubled by the wail of rage that comes from Agnes Kölsch: 'I thought too highly of you, too noble and too mature,' she writes him August 15, 1918: 'Farewell, it was not meant to be.'³¹ Much ink expended trying to arrange various trysts with Anka, which Goebbels sometimes prudishly cancels because her worried mother (unimpressed by this parvenu) and her sisters disapprove.³² Once she gives him a rose. It graces his desk at Rheydt beneath a carved Black Forest heart she has given him earlier.³³ His soldier brother Konrad, home on leave, jokes to him that he will probably be able to greet him as a cardinal later; he inquires about the carved heart on the wall. 'A gift from Archbishop of Freiburg?' he asks ironically. 'From his lady housekeeper replies Joseph with a salacious wink.'³⁴

Joseph beavers away on 'Judas'.³⁵ Anka incautiously shows it around and in no time the clergy of Rheydt are asking him angry questions about it.³⁶ On August 27 he is summoned to his former scripture teacher Father Moller, who draws his attention to the pernicious nature of such writing: 'I was so furious I would have torn "Judas" into a thousand shreds if I had it with me,' writes Goebbels. The priest requires him to undertake to destroy even his own copy of the script. Has all his toil been for nothing? 'What shall I do?' he appeals to Anka. 'I am in despair.'³⁷ (The letter survives among his papers.) It marks his first break with the church. He declines the summons by Unitas to attend their general assembly in Münster to report on the summer semester at Freiburg. Instead, he carouses with his pals in Düsseldorf.

Kölsch has been thrown out of their Catholic fraternity. Goebbels supports the ouster, explaining to Anka: 'My best friend turned out to be a scoundrel.' When Anka ironically calls him a puritan he responds that Unitas has principles.³⁸ By this time he has learned from her that Kölsch has sexually propositioned her.³⁹ To seal their friendship, Goebbels loyally shows her the letter concerned. Of her solely maternal interest in him there seems no doubt. 'Do you know what I should like now?' writes to the pint-sized student Goebbels. 'Just to stroke my hair through your hair and clasp you so tight that you look quite desperate.'

Her widowed mother's disapproval grows. He records in dismay that she regards him as a *homo molestissimus* and clearly frowns on any notion of them both attending the same university next term. He stuffs Anka to inform him where she will be studying, 'so that I can cross university off my own list.'⁴¹

ON September 3, 1918 Konrad Goebbels returns to the western front

He accuses his younger brother Joseph of not taking any interest in the war and finally extracts from him a promise to read at least the daily war communiqués. Konrad declares that he is proud to be fighting for his fatherland. 'As you will realize,' Joseph dryly informs Anka, 'he is Mother's darling. While I claim that privilege, remarkably, more of my father.' But he adds, 'I believe my mother is the best at understanding me.'⁴² He advises Anka to read his version of the Last Supper, where Judas—with whom he thus identifies—talks about his mother, how he sulks and does not eat, and she just shakes her head and murmurs, 'Judas, Judas;' and how bitterly he weeps thereafter.⁴³

He hopes that Anka's mother will relent and agree to them studying together at Munich. His father prefers Bonn or Münster, both nearer to the parental home. 'The decision is in your mother's hands,' he writes to Anka.⁴⁴ A friend tells him that she has boasted to his fiancée about her last evening with Goebbels at Freiburg.⁴⁵ Goebbels scolds her for having so rudely dragged in the dust the memory of these, 'the most sacred and beautiful hours of my life.' In the same letter he repents and asks, 'May I today for the first time press a tender kiss upon your rosebud lips?'⁴⁶ In her reply, she mocks his stern morals. She has decided to study that winter at Würzburg. He therefore chooses Würzburg too, and finds lodgings on the fourth floor of No. 8 Blumen Strasse—'A wonderful room right beside the river,' he tells his friend Fritz Prang.⁴⁷

Ecstatic that she is so close, he sends her a note as soon as he settles in, perhaps justifying his lack of physical ardor. 'If love is only in the mind,' he explains, 'it might be called platonic; if only physical, it is frivolous, ugly, unbeautiful. It is the noble union of these two factors that creates the ideal love.'⁴⁸

At Würzburg his studying begins in earnest. He plows through *Crime and Punishment*, he regularly attends the seminars on ancient and modern history and on German literature. The Armistice of November 1918 makes little mark on him. His father writes pleading with him to come home if things get too dangerous, what with the revolution, in Würzburg.⁴⁹ Goebbels notices the returning troops, the popular sense of dismay, the establishment of enemy zones of occupation; he sees Anka weeping, he hears of communist mobs rampaging in Bavaria.

'Don't you also feel,' he asks Prang in a letter on November 13, 'that the time will come again when people will yearn for intellectual and spiritual values rather than brute mob appeal?'

More letters go to Anka. He writes her the kind of letter that romantic females long to receive.⁵⁰ In her replies she frets about his frailty, and swears undying love. 'I hope you've gone to bed long ago,' she writes in one, 'and are dreaming that I am pressing the tender kiss upon your forehead to dispel your gloomy thoughts for all eternity.'⁵¹ For the first time in his life he misses the carol service on Christmas Eve; he spends the hours in Anka's room, and watches entranced as she kneels at her bedside to say her prayers. He sleeps in her chaste embrace—but that is all.⁵²

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By the time they both leave Würzburg for their respective homes January 22, 1919, the Belgians have occupied Rheydt. An Allied curtain has descended across the Rhineland. Sick and hungry, Goebbels writes her at four-thirty A.M. on a deserted platform, waiting for the train to Cologne.⁵³ At Cologne he has to wait all night—'the whole station milling with Englishmen, Blacks, and Frenchmen.'⁵⁴ Anka writes him in Rheydt that she misses Freiburg; her sisters, shown Goebbels photographs, prefer his head to the full figure, she candidly writes.⁵⁵ He looks desperately ill: He is suffering from chronic headaches, for which the university's professor of medicine has found no cure.⁵⁶ A ten o'clock curfew is in force. The Belgian censors will not pass letters written in German script; gradually his handwriting deteriorates. Without a formal permit, travel to Recklinghausen (Anka's home town) is impossible. His mother wants their relationship ended anyway; upon her return home Anka is dragged off to church to confess her sins. She tells Goebbels she has prayed for him. He sets up her three latest photos in his room including one on a sunlit Castle Hill.⁵⁷

THE post-revolutionary government in Germany ordered elections to be held on January 26, 1919. On the election eve he heard his old teacher Dr Bartels speak for the Democratic Party. 'I was strengthened,' writes Goebbels, 'in my opposition to the Democrats.' All his former schoolmates would vote for the Catholic Center or the more right-wing German Nationalist party; already, Goebbels inclined toward the latter—'They are still Germans in the German fatherland, thank God.' He envied those living outside the occupied territories like Anka in Recklinghausen. 'I grant,' he wrote her, 'his letters displaying political fervor for the time, that our fatherland will once more become the way we knew it to our children.'⁵⁸ In the election Joseph and his brother Konrad both voted for the German Nationalists.⁵⁹ 'Grim times,' he predicted a few days later, 'lie ahead for us Germans.'⁶⁰ A talk with organized workers at Rheine convinced him that they might have a real case against their capitalist oppressors.⁶¹

That May of 1919 Anka returns to Freiburg. Kölsch is down there waiting. Goebbels hurries to join them. A French Negro soldier lets him through the checkpoint at Ludwigshafen. Anka seems cooler, and confesses in the morning that she has slept with Kölsch. Goebbels forgives her and keeps away the tears of contrition welling in her eyes. For an instant of happiness she is willing to accept an eternity of perdition, he will write in July 1919: 'a truly divine female, but not one for him to marry, he decides.'⁶² They would destroy each other. Yet every time he sees her in the years that follow, his knees knock and his face runs crimson just like the first time.

One afternoon in 1919 there is a knock at his door in Freiburg. Richard Flisges walks in, rain dripping from his demob trenchcoat. An ex-lieutenant, he is back from the wars, decorated and embittered. His arm is in a sling.⁶⁴ He has failed the university entrance examination and will now turn into a pacifist and agitator against the established order.

Goebbels listens eagerly to this rootless, ill-educated, disillusioned soldier. He has always had a respect for the lower orders. Writing to Willy Zilles in 1915 he has discounted the poet Horace's theme of *odi profanum vulgus et arceo* ('I hate the vulgar mob and keep them at a distance'), preferring instead the romantic poet Wilhelm Raabe's motif: *Hab' acht auf die Gassen!* ('Pay heed to the street!').⁶⁵ Flisges introduces him to the socialism of Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels and Walther Rathenau and implants further trace-elements of the anti-bourgeois class struggle in Goebbels. Thus, while Goebbels attends the seminars on Goethe and on the era of *Sturm und Drang*, he begins to think more about the social and political issues scarring defeated Germany. In the evenings he argues about God; he is beginning to have serious doubts about his religious beliefs.

He and Anka leave Freiburg early in August 1919. He borrows one hundred marks from a friend, and pawns his watch to a waiter to pay for supper. He has to spend the autumn break at Münster as his identity papers will not get him back into the occupied Rhineland. Anka phones him every day in the local café, but he can barely afford the obligatory cup of coffee. He begins to write his own life story as a novel, *Michael Voorman*, in which Anka is identifiable as the heroine Hertha Holk. He gets home to Rheydt, crossing the frontier illegally in an overflowing train at Düsseldorf. On September 19 he posts to the Albertus Magnus Society a fresh application for funds.

Later, heading south to Munich with Anka, he pauses briefly at Frankfurt where he visits Goethe's house. But why tarry in this Jewish city, he asks himself, when Munich beckons from afar? He borrows 1,200 marks from yet another school friend and finds lodgings in Munich on the second floor of Papa Vigier's at No. 2 Roman Strasse, out in Neuhausen. On October 29, his twenty-second birthday, Anka writes in his diary, 'National Holiday!' He sends two more postcards to the catholic charity; the stamp on one is overprinted with the legend People's Republic of Bavaria, because the communists are now in power.

The charity makes him a final loan of 250 marks. At Munich he studies under the Swiss art historian, Professor Heinrich Wölfflin; he studies music under Professor Hermann Ludwig Baron von der Pfordten and catholic theology under Professor Joseph Schnitzer. But his real intellectual nourishment is from what he takes in at the galleries and museums—the paintings of Arnold Böckling, of Carl Spitzweg, and of Anselm Feuerbach. He reads voraciously, devouring Sophocles' drama *Antigone*, August Strindberg's *The Red Room*, Thomas Mann's *Death in Venice*, and assorted works by Henrik Ibsen and Leo Tolstoy.

He auctions his suits, sees Anka pawn her own gold watch, and hocks his own watch for a pittance to—he recalls in 1925—an 'insolent Jew.' Such stereotyped references are rare in his early letters. On the contrary, he sends Anka a gentle rebuke. 'As you know, I can't stand this exaggerated antisemitism,' he writes, in a reference to their teacher Gerhard Bartels. 'I can't claim that many of my best friends are Jews, but my view

Scorpio

* is you don't get rid of them by huffing and puffing, let alone by pogrom: and if you could do so that would be both highly ignoble and unworthy. There is still little trace of his later murderous antisemitism.

* D.T. I do not know who became his presence, but who can say that nothing effective was taking place.

2: Prodigal Son

WHILE at Freiburg university in 1919 Joseph Goebbels turned his back on the catholic church. Perhaps the suffocating catholicism of the diocesan city of Würzburg had contributed to his restlessness. Certainly he was deeply troubled by the nature of God and what he saw as the falsification of the true faith by idolatrous priests. In his novel *Michael* he allowed his hero to brood upon this dilemma. The result was much portentous, empty rhetoric, but there was one proposition of substance: 'It hardly matters what we believe in, so long as we believe in something'—the essence of the later Joseph Goebbels.

In July 1919 the *Unitas* journal reported that 'Herr Göbbels' had seceded from the fraternity. He continued to waver, and wrote to his father on October 31 about this torment ('But if I should lose my faith ...'). He spoke of the diligence with which he was persevering in his studies and—be it noted—stressed that he had not compromised his morals. But he added: 'Why don't you tell me that you curse me as the Prodigal Son who has left his parents and gone into the wilderness?'¹

On November 7, his father sent him an angry reply, followed two days later by a more reasoned epistle setting aside his son's doubts. Many a young man was tormented by doubt, he wrote. He challenged his wayward son to answer this question: 'Do you intend writing books that are not compatible with the catholic religion?' Then he reminded him of how they had prayed together at the deathbed of Elisabeth: 'What was the one consolation in our grief then? It was this: That the dear little soul had been properly provided with the last rites of our Holy Church, and that we could pray for her *together*.'

Scripture teacher Father Johannes Mollen would recall that after leaving university Goebbels continued to speak at catholic conclaves: 'I myself always stayed in touch with him.' Years later, his parish priest would tersely justify his original recommendation to the Albertus Magnus Society: 'None of us could see into the future.'

UNDER the influence of Flisges and his own study of Dostoyevsky Goebbels became politically aware. He was now twenty-two and leaning ideologically to the left. When the student Anton Count von Arco-Valley was sentenced for the assassination of the extreme left-wing prime minister of Bavaria Kurt Eisner (alias Isidor Kosmanowski), Goebbels became curious about socialism. Being as yet more of a literary than a political

Hypotheses
Lead
to
examination
+ knowledge

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inclination he explored his ideas in a drama, scribbled in an exercise book, entitled 'The Working Classes' Struggle.'² Again he pawned his watch and set off, alone, for home. In a few days during the Easter break he sketched another socio-political drama, *The Seed* (later *Blood-Seed*). He tried to get employment as a teacher in East Prussia or in Holland (he had a smattering of maternal Dutch).⁴ As the communist revolution swept across the Ruhr, Goebbels decided to make his home run for the Ph.D. degree; he chose Heidelberg for the attempt.

That Christmas he found himself alone in Munich, prevented by the Allied occupation authorities from joining his family at Rheydt for the festivities. He stayed in the Bavarian capital, as Richard Wagner's *Ring* cycle was to be performed at the National Theatre; he found himself strolling through the cobbled, snowswept streets on Christmas Eve, entirely deserted save for a police constable wrapped to the ears against the cold. From somewhere came the sound of children singing; and then of a piano—Franz Schubert, the melodies borne through the air, would later write, as though on angels' hands. 'I know not how long I stood there,' he recorded. 'Only that I sat that evening in a quiet, dark corner of the church of Our Lady and celebrated Christmas alone, though in a dream. On December 29 I went to the Tyrol, going up into the eternal mountains satiated with the sounds of Wagner.'⁵

HE and Anka have drifted apart since that Christmas of 1919. As recently as December 19 they have mooched along the shores of Lake Starnberg and Anka has sketched in his pocket diary a room with two (single) beds. She has given him a gold bracelet. He has given her Heinrich Heine's *Book of Ballads* with a fulsome dedication. But she begins to make possessive scenes; he takes refuge in Tolstoy's *War and Peace*, he alternately fights with her or forges fantastic plans of marriage, then sees the shipwrecked on her bourgeois attitudes. He 'runs into' her in Freiburg and finds that she too is making for Heidelberg. He persuades her to study elsewhere—'What an idiot I am,' he recalls later, perhaps rationalizing his own failure to hold on to her. They have entered that cruel phase in a too-long affair when each partner derives more pleasure from making the other suffer.

When he next sees her it will be Whitsun. He reads from *The Seed* to her, but she, the wealthy miller's daughter, is alienated by its left-wing political message. The rift widens. She begins to see Theo Geitmann, close friend of his.⁶ Chagrined, he returns the bracelet. He offers her a formal engagement ('If you don't feel strong enough to say yes,' he writes 'then we must each go our separate ways'); she turns him down.⁷ After one unsatisfactory night, with him on the chaise-longue and her in bed, he pencils a four-page letter of farewell, a romantic torrent of pleas to return to his embrace. 'I rest my fortune in your lenient hand,' it concludes. 'Cast the first stone if you must. May it then dash me to pieces, and may you never come to regret it.' Satisfied by this literary effort, he leaves the letter unsent (the four sheets show no folds).⁸

Spending the autumn break at home he reads Dostoyevsky's *The Brothers Karamazov*, and suffers a nervous collapse. He pens a testament, dated October 1, 1920, in which he allocates his books, his alarm clock, his inkwell, and other pathetic chattels to his friends: they are to sell off clothing to repay his debts, to his father, Director Cohnen's wife, a Bonn jeweler, and the Albertus Magnus charity. He wills his poetry and novellas to Flisges and his mother (in that order). 'Miss Anka Stalherm is to be urged to burn my letters.... May she be happy and not brood upon my death.' The final sentences hint unmistakably at suicide: 'I depart gladly from a life which has become just hell for me.'⁹ He folds this into a small envelope, but takes no further action.

That autumn of 1920, learning that she is in Munich, he borrows money from his brothers and sends his trusty friend Flisges to find out more. Flisges writes that Anka has been seen escorted by a gentleman in a flashy waistcoat 'with many gold knobs and pins.'¹⁰ Distraught, Goebbels hurries from Heidelberg to Munich, to Anka's address in Amalien Strasse; while he waits outside, Flisges stomps upstairs. But she has left for Freiburg the day before, 'with her fiancé.'¹¹ She has fallen for Georg Mummé, a young, stodgy law student five years older, and with better financial prospects, than the crippled esthete Goebbels.¹² In a daze, Goebbels pens a vile letter to her which gives him brief satisfaction. He writes again in remorse. Her reply is the last for several years. She is 'very unhappy,' she confesses, as she knows that he is the first and last man who has ever loved her with such intensity. 'I will always be your true Anka,' is her final empty salutation.¹³

To the interloper Mummé—whom she shortly marries—he writes what he calls a 'rather categorical' letter. In the new year he will ask her to return all his poems and love letters. 'Anka, thou murderess!' he reproaches her memory, and eight years later her betrayal will still fester in his mind. 'Anka walked out on me,' he will write. 'And my entire relationship with women has suffered ever since.'¹⁴

HE had hoped to study for his degree under the distinguished Friedrich Gundolf, professor of literary history at Heidelberg. Gundolf (Gundolfinger) had written the definitive biography of Goethe. When Goebbels arrived at the university for the summer term of 1920 however Gundolf directed him to Professor Max Baron von Waldberg, a fellow Jew who had authored many a work on the history of literature. Waldberg assigned as his doctoral topic the obscure playwright Wilhelm von Schütz (1776–1847). In his competent dissertation Goebbels made perhaps over-frequent use of the first person (as in 'As far as I can see ...') and carefully praised the opinions of Gundolf and Waldberg.¹⁵ Later he would have the university's records doctored to imply that his dissertation was more concerned with the political undercurrents of the Early Romantic Period; and when in 1943 the university ceremonially renewed his degree they tactfully omitted Waldberg's name from the festivities.

He did not ignore the other sex entirely during these last months of

his formal studies. He would later refer cryptically to perhaps a score females. As for Anka, Mumme had now threatened legal sanctions if he did not stop pestering her, so Goebbels took his revenge by rewriting *Michael* to make the heroine suffer as much despair as he.¹⁶

Back at Heidelberg after Christmas 1920 Professor Waldberg told him to study another term before submitting his dissertation. Goebbels returned to Rheydt in March 1921 to draft and redraft the masterpiece while Flisges kept him company. An unwary comrade loaned him his fiancée, Maria Kamerbeek, to type the dissertation. He dedicated the completed 215-page opus to his parents. Waldberg was impressed and offered a few suggestions for improvement ('But it's already *typed*,' wrote Goebbels in his notes before submitting it unchanged). He attended the oral examination in the prescribed top hat on November 18, 1921. The four professors included Waldberg himself. At that evening's seminar party Waldberg addressed him with a knowing wink as 'Herr Doctor'.

Thus he had made it. He now had the coveted title which opened doors to class, wealth, and authority.¹⁷ He shared his triumph with his rowdy friend Richard Flisges; they caroused all night long, then traveled tipsily north to Bonn still wearing their top hats. Their friends, also sporting top hats, were waiting on the platform. Then on to Rheydt: the humble house in Dahlener Strasse was bedecked in flowers as the Prodigal Son returned, haggard but well spoken, educated, and, as always, Latin in his looks. If there had been a fatted calf to hand, old Fritz Goebbels' eyes awash at this visual proof that he was pulling his family through into a better future, would surely have slaughtered it.

3: 'A Wandering Scholar, I'

JOSEPH Goebbels cherished that doctor's title. He asked to be called 'Herr Doctor' and used it even when just initialing—'Dr G.' But for the next four years he remained perforce a nihilist doing nothing. To the quiet despair of his parents he squandered the pittance that he did earn from his meager writings or tutoring. Germany meanwhile slithered into economic chaos. The marching resumed: the Poles into Silesia; new parties in Germany; Mussolini on Rome. And on January 11, 1923 the French marched into the Ruhr. President Friedrich Ebert called for a campaign of passive resistance, and the French put the twenty-nine-year-old Albert Leo Schlageter before a firing squad for sabotage.¹ Later that year a young malcontent called Adolf Hitler, aged thirty-four, staged a *coup d'état* in Munich, was double-crossed by the Bavarian politicians, and ended up in prison at Landsberg. Berlin undertook to pay reparations to the Allies at the rate of 2.5 billion marks a year. Economic ruin faced Germany.

Goebbels neither noticed, nor protested, nor cared. His head was in the clouds. He even laid plans with Flisges to emigrate to India. But that would cost money too, so he stretched out on his bed at home instead and soaked up Oswald Spengler's writings on the decline of the west. The truth about his middle twenties was therefore unedifying, and in later years he would skirt around it in ever-widening circles. Later he allowed legends to circulate about his heroic undercover activity and early commitment to the Nazi party. Clad in what looked like infantry battledress, he was heard beginning one speech in Frankfurt in the winter of 1924–5 with the words, 'Those of us who have our injuries from the war . . .'² He later claimed to have attended his first party meeting during his months at Munich university. (Reworking his drama *Michael*³ he would elaborate: he had heard an unnamed speaker of extraordinary magnetism speak—'Hope shines on gray faces . . . A miracle.') He had applied there and then to join the party, he claimed. In 1927 the Goebbels legend would maintain that he had actually advised Hitler in 1919 when the party program was drafted. All of this was quite untrue. He would also suggest that in 1923 Hitler had commanded him to infiltrate into the occupied Ruhr, where under an assumed name he had led a resistance cell not far from the martyr Schlageter himself, until the French had deported him. 'If we had been too refined,' he would brag in 1943, 'none of us would have survived the year 1923.' Goebbels too was behind the

1924

Allen

'letter' which would circulate in later years and which he had alleged sent to Hitler in Landsberg jail ('Like a meteor you soared aloft before our astonished gaze... Your address to the court in Munich was greatest speech in Germany since Bismarck').

These legends endured even in the obituaries printed by his enemies. 'I am not a little astonished,' wrote his fellow Nazi Karl Kaufmann June 1927, 'that Dr Goebbels portrays things so differently. The run I have heard in Berlin, that Dr Goebbels was already advising Adolf Hitler in Munich on the program of the N.S.D.A.P. [Nazi party] 1919, is also totally untrue.' Dr Goebbels had neither joined the passive resistance in 1923 nor taken any active part in it, said Kaufmann. Goebbels was not even an early party member.⁵ True, he would somehow wangle a low number, 8762, for himself, but he did not in fact join until early 1925.

Fortunately Goebbels utilized idle hours in July 1924 to jot down a memoir of his early life. Hitler is mentioned only once, in a passing reference to 1923: 'Bavaria. Hitler.'

Goebbels was rootless, restless, and now friendless too: Richard Flis had left to work in the mines. Challenged by the Albertus Magnus Society to give due account of his progress, Goebbels replied grandly on January 10, 1922 that he was looking out for a position in the press or theater. After carrying half a dozen of his pieces, the *Westdeutsche Landeszeitung* published no more, although he heard that they had attracted much attention. He worked briefly as the newspaper's art critic but was made redundant just before his birthday in 1922.⁶ A few days later he delivered a public lecture on Oswald Spengler and contemporary literature; he praised Spengler's critical remarks about the Jews, which in his view had gone to the root of the matter and 'must inevitably bring about a spiritual clarification of the Jewish problem.'⁷ His mother's suitcase would hold clippings of just a dozen newspaper contributions by Dr phil. Josef Goebbels.⁸ Among the literary products of these otherwise idle years were another drama entitled 'Heinrich Kämpfert'⁹ and manuscripts with titles like 'Gypsy Blood,' 'Those Who Adore the Sun,'¹⁰ and 'A Wanderer's Scholar, I.'¹¹ One of his poems was called 'At Night.'¹²

I awoke one night.

You lay by my side.

The pale moon played on your left hand,

And it was white as snow.

But your right lay on your heart,

And rose and fell,

As your breast did rise and fall.

THE hand, the breast in question belong to a pretty girl in Rheyn. Herbert Hompesch whispers to him that she is Else Janke, a schoolteacher and orphan. She is well built and motherly, he so slight that, seeing her from the rear once, she thinks him only twelve years old.¹³ He will later

describe her variously as 'a rare mixture of passion and prudence'¹⁴ and as 'a lovely, sweet-tempered chatterbox.'¹⁵ Interestingly he will write: 'I often think of her as my mother.'¹⁶

What strikes her most, she relates years later, are his expressive eyes. She and Fritz Prang's girlfriend Alma Kuppe both teach at the Rheydt school attended by Goebbels' young sister Maria. Else teaches needlework and physical instruction. They make up a foursome, go sailing or on excursions together to places like the local Rheydt castle.¹⁷ He will later recall an evening with her in the summer of 1922: He kisses her, she tries to slap him, he makes as if to leave, she detains him, and they walk out all night long while they talk about their lives. 'I tell her about Anka,' he will write, adding with a trace of disappointment, 'She remains demure.' Rebuffed again!

From Baltrum, a Frisian island resort, she wires him not to come: He borrows money and disobeys. Up in her room he swears his love for her. 'I kiss her to my heart's content. She resists no longer.' Inspired by seeing Else nude for the first time ('just as God created her') he will rewrite his long-suffering *Michael* to include a scene where the eponymous hero struggles to conjure up the Muses on a Frisian island. But to his annoyance Else will not admit to their relationship in public. The crippled Dr Goebbels has much to learn about the mysterious fluids and capillaries that, mixed together, make up the female brain.

His girls are bowled over by the literary style and the intensity with which he woos them. He sets Else and Alma to copying out his articles and verses. But his writings are universally rejected by the big Jewish publishers like Mosse and Ullstein in Berlin. He remarks to Else that you cannot get ahead unless you are 'one of the boys.' Else makes no response.

'My creativity is zero,' he writes. 'Why? Am I a failure?'

Else visits her family's friends in the banking world and finds a clerical job for him at the Dresdner Bank in Cologne. He does not rejoice—indeed his mood seems to darken. In a somber letter to Else at Christmas he lays bare his tortured soul at such length that we must ask where true emotion ends and conscious posturing begins. His letters ramble on, half sermons, half diatribes, acres of blank verse and poetry scattered at the feet of his admiring if tiny audience.

Else firmly considers herself engaged to him, and even discusses with Alma whether his deformed foot might be congenital and affect their children. Goebbels has a quarrel with her about his deformity: whereupon she mentions a minor drawback of her own—she is half Jewish. This has not dawned on him until now. The magic goes out of his life, to be replaced by a nagging skepticism about her.

Starting at the bank on January 2, 1923, he sees at first hand the unpalatable side of capitalism, and reacts with repugnance to the 'sacred speculation' by the rich and affluent. The country's banks, he finds, are nearly all Jewish. He begins to ponder upon the relationship between das Judentum (roughly, Judaism or the Jewish community) and the Money Problem. The more he looks around the more he perceives the Jews—

scene
(Göppeler)

young Otto Klemperer, whom he hears conducting a Gustav Mahl symphony, turns out to be a Jew; so does Mahler himself. He studi Houston Stewart Chamberlain and he finds himself troubled by t Jewishness of Else.

He cannot ignore the contrasts. He himself has to set out from Rhey each morning at five-thirty and gets home at seven or eight each night while his pay packet shrinks in value through the galloping inflation th has set in. 'Cologne is ad nauseam,' he writes. 'Pay check worthless.' (C March 27 he sends the Albertus Magnus Society a ten-thousand-ma banknote; it is worth less than one gold mark.) From his grim lodgin in No. 77 Siebengebirgsallee in a southern suburb he writes endle letters to his 'little rosebud' Else. He yearns for her. 'Why have we tw so much in love, been born into so wretched a time?' And yet: 'I am firmly convinced that the time will come for me to use my real strengt

LYING in a deckchair on Baltrum island one July afternoon in 192 trying to avoid Else's tedious sister Gertrud, he received the shatterir news that Richard Flisges had been crushed to death down the mines Schliersee.¹⁸ He would dramatize his grief, wallowing for months in sel pity; and he rewrote the ending of *Michael* to send his hero down t mines to his death despite his landlady's premonition of doom. He h: Michael die on January 30: that date is a kind of premonition too.

Upon his return from Baltrum, the bank fired him. Keeping the tru from his parents, he continued to commute to Cologne, but bare troubled to scan the newspapers for vacancies, although he assured El: that he did.¹⁹ During his six weeks away on Baltrum the mark's value he dwindled to almost nothing. The U.S. dollar bought three million marl on August 1 and 142 million eight weeks later. Else's savings shran From his lodgings in Cologne he wrote to his father pleading illness—nervous disease which must be congenital, he said—and his father begge him to come home, going so far as to send the fare.²⁰ Fritz Prang foun him a new job as a caller on the floor of Cologne's stock exchange. H wrote an essay about Flisges which the local newspaper published : Christmas.²¹

Trapped in his lodgings, Goebbels' brain fevered on. He brougt forth a new drama, 'Prometheus,' and in September another play, *T Wanderer*, in which a Traveler guides an often despairing Poet across th heights and sloughs surrounding the German people.²² He witnesse from afar the collapse of passive resistance; he lived sometimes in a alcoholic haze, because one guilder would buy fifty beers. The worc Judentum, *Qual* (anguish), and *Verzweiflung* (despair) whirled ka eidoscopically around his jottings.

Else had given him a notebook and on October 17, 1923 he resume his famous diary.²³ 'I can't stand the anguish any longer,' he wrote. 'I'v got to set down all the bitterness that burdens my heart.' For Goebbel writing the diary became something of a fetish, an advance programmin of his brain for great things to come. He was aware of a messianic sens of mission. In July he asked in its pages: Who am I, why am I here, wha

is my task and what my purport? Am I a wastrel, or an emissary who is waiting for God's Word?' And he added: 'Again and again one shining light escapes the depths of my despair: my belief in my own purity, and my conviction that some day my hour will come.'

'WHERE are you now, my dear deceased?' he appealed on the first anniversary of Flisge's death. 'Why don't you give me some portent of where we must go and what we must do to obtain deliverance. . . . Leave me not in despair!'²⁴ Friendless and jobless, he sank to a low point of mental decline that bordered sometimes on suicide.²⁵ As inflation roared out of control his father became increasingly monosyllabic. 'Why must so many give me up as beyond hope,' Goebbels had asked Else in a letter in June 1923, 'and consider me lazy and unreasonable and unmodern?' Overshadowing their whole relationship is her Jewishness, from which there is no escape: in November 1923 she writes to him, 'Our whole row recently about the racial problem kept coming back to me. I just couldn't stop thinking about it and saw it really as an obstacle to our future relationship. In fact I think you're far too obsessed about the whole thing.'²⁶ So he stayed at home, whiling away the hours in the summer house which his parents had built, his powerful thoughts riding on ahead of his frail frame.²⁷ He dreamed of launching his own journal in Elberfeld; but where to raise the capital?²⁸ He fancied himself winning the literary prize offered by the *Kölnische Zeitung* with *Michael* and traveling the continent as a much acclaimed scholar.²⁹ 'But nobody pays me anything for what I write,' he moaned in August 1924.³⁰

He yearned helplessly for Anka and her glittering green eyes, and spent days sorting out the letters they had exchanged.³¹ 'Just one day together,' he wrote in his notes, 'and we would understand each other again.'³² A deep, unremitting despair had seized him. He bemoaned the God that had created him a crippled weakling. 'Despair, despair!' he lamented. 'I can't bear to live and see all this injustice. I must join the fight for Justice and Freedom! Despair! Help me, O Lord, I am at the end of my strength!!!'³³

The more the products of his festering intellect were rejected by unseen editors, the more he saw the Jews behind his torment. He wrote at length on January 23, 1924 to Mosse's *Berliner Tageblatt*, applying for a job as sub-editor and boldly asking for 250 marks per month. The curriculum vitae which he appended to this application was more than economical with the truth: he claimed to have studied modern 'theatre and press history' from November 1921 to 1922 at Bonn and Berlin—in fact he had never visited Germany's capital; more recently, he said, he had become familiar with 'broad areas of modern banking' at the Dresdner Bank. 'In consequence of minor nervous problems caused by overstrain at work and an accident'—he had been set on in the street a year before—'I was obliged to give up my employment in Cologne.'³⁴ Theodor Wolff, Mosse's editor, who turned him down, was Jewish.³⁵ The diaries for the next years show him in a painful light—introspective to the point of

obsession, scribbling plays, articles, and critiques for a public no larger than himself and, sometimes, the woman in his life. With dwindling hope but dull obstinacy he kept submitting the typescript of *Michael Voorn* to new publishers.³⁶ Why even get up in the morning? 'Nothing awakes me—no joy, no suffering, no duty, no job.'³⁷

HE had already tried his hand at public speaking—his notes refer to a November 1922 talk in Rheydt, well received in the local press.³⁸ On June 24 he and Fritz Prang visited a local communist meeting. Invited to speak, Goebbels was interrupted immediately: 'Capitalist swine!' He rounded on his heckler. 'Here is my purse,' he challenged. 'You show me yours. The one who has the most is the capitalist swine!' The miners and textile workers roared with laughter and allowed him to speak on.³⁹

In the wake of the failed Munich putsch the Nazi party had been banned; with Hitler imprisoned, its former members had splintered into factions like the Völkisch-Sozialer Block, a coalition with the former Deutsch-Völkische Freiheitspartei (German Folkish Freedom party) founded by landowner Albert von Graefe.⁴⁰ The charismatic leader of the Nazis in northern Germany was Gregor Strasser, a wealthy pharmacist from Landshut in Bavaria. These right-wing groups had fared well in the election of May 4, 1924, attracting 6.5 percent of the vote. On June 29 Goebbels looked in on one pettifogging meeting of the party at Elberfeld. He was not impressed. 'So these are the leaders of the "folkish" movement in the occupied zone,' he scoffed in his diary. 'You Jews, and you French and Belgian gentlemen, don't have much cause for worry.' He had evidently heard more positive word about the Nazis in Bavaria because he added: 'If only Hitler were free!' The local folk chieftain was the politician Friedrich Wieggershaus. He was worthy, obliging, and good-natured. 'This notion of a "folkish" Greater Germany is bad,' wrote Goebbels, 'but we lack any capable, hardworking, and high-minded leaders.'⁴¹ Germany, he concluded in a typical Goebbels phrase, was crying out for a leader, like the thirst of parched summer earth for rain. 'One man!!! Bismarck *sta up!* My brain and heart reel with despair for my fatherland.'⁴²

What were his politics at this time? His reading had vested him with some surprising inspirations. The memoirs of August Bebel (1844–1913), the founder of the Social Democratic party, had taught him not to lose heart.⁴³ The real workers, Goebbels concluded, were in fact nationalist to the core. The Jews, intellectually head and shoulders above Bebel, had run rings around him. Goebbels for a time even described himself as a German communist; but this was more for the Russian origins of communism than for what it said as a creed. He read the diary kept by Henri Alexandre de Catt as private secretary to Frederick the Great and three times afterward quoted the monarch's dictum: 'Life becomes a curse, and dying a duty.' When he plowed through Richard Wagner's autobiography he identified painfully with the maestro's ang

ished struggle to survive in Paris, and with his physical suffering. He saw Wagner as a wage-slave enchained by the 'filthy Jew' Schlesinger.⁴⁴

Looking around, he scowled at his smug, shallow-minded, pinstriped contemporaries, their lives dominated by the pay packet, football, and sex, and he understood why the communists hated the bourgeoisie.⁴⁵ In July 1924 he began holding little political meetings at his house (in his parents' absence), at which he described the great socialist experiment in Russia—'the glow from the east,' he called it in Latin in his diary: *Ex oriente lux*. Only the Jewish nature of the Bolshevik leadership bothered him. 'Men of Russia!' he wrote. 'Chase the Jews to the devil and put out your hand of friendship to Germany!'⁴⁶

He was not however an international socialist. The great Germanic works inspired him. He immersed himself in Johann Sebastian Bach's *Saint Matthew's Passion*, and discovered Wagner's *Meistersinger*.⁴⁷ His antisemitism was reinforced by reading the book *Prozesse* (Trials) by Maximilian Harden—he recorded afterward that Harden was not a German at all but a Polish Jew, Isidor Witkowski.⁴⁸ 'What a hypocritical Schweinehund this damn Jew is,' he wrote; and then, broadening his aim: 'Rogues, blackguards, traitors: they suck the blood out of our arteries. Vampires!' Harden, he decided, was a dangerous man precisely because he gave his writing all he had—pungency, a caustic wit, and satire. 'Typical of how the Jews fight,' he assessed.⁴⁹ 'Our worst enemies in Germany are the Jews.'⁵⁰

Everywhere he detected their baneful influence. If he, Goebbels, were in power he would pack them all into cattle trucks and ship them out of Germany: so he wrote on July 2, 1924. However, reading the prison letters of Rosa Luxemburg⁵¹ he was surprised at the idealism and warmth of this militant leftist's letters. He sensed that perhaps he was doing her an injustice. 'You can't change your nature,' he realized guiltily. 'And my nature is now rather biased toward the antisemitic.'

THE right-wing parties announced a two-day rally to be held at Weimar in mid-August 1924 to agree upon strategy for the next elections, due on December 7.

Weimar! What visions of Goethe and Schiller the name evoked. In the privacy of his diary Goebbels sometimes seriously compared himself with one or the other, particularly Schiller.⁵² So when his former schoolfriend Fritz Prang suggested they go to Weimar together he was delighted. It would be his first foray into the heart of Germany.

The Weimar meeting was a milestone in his career.⁵³ He gained immediate inspiration from the well-attended rally at the National Theatre and the shouts of Heil. He saw for the first time the swastika—this sinister four-elbowed symbol—and inked it into his diary. All these young people who are fighting alongside me,' he wrote. 'It does my heart good.' He saw them sporting the same swastika emblem on their helmets—Hitler's elite guard, the Highland League (Bund Oberland)—as they paraded to hear an address by the war hero Erich Ludendorff,

patron of the folkish movement. Sizing up the others, he saw Albert v. Graefe, a tall gangling ex-major in a black frock-coat, as a man of culture and Gregor Strasser as a warm human being. He also encountered the Nuremberg Nazi Julius Streicher, who had founded his own Party for the Struggle against International Jewry: this fanatic with the pinch lips was too intense for his liking, but he reflected that every movement needed the occasional man who went berserk as well.

With Hitler still in prison, the Weimar rally was *Hamlet* without the Prince of Denmark. Ludendorff was no Führer; he was not the messiah that Goebbels was seeking. He spent that Sunday on a quiet pilgrimage through the homes of Goethe and Schiller. Sitting in the former's favorite chair he dashed off a few lines to Else before strolling over to Schiller's large yellow-ochre house. That afternoon, still an outsider, he watched the flags and swastikas parading—some thirty thousand marching men in his estimate. The tumultuous roars of Heil when Hitler's name was mentioned made a lasting impression. For a while he sat with Fritz Prang in a bar, Chemnitz. Fritz wanted to relax but Goebbels was so keyed up that he talked only about politics, ignoring the come-hither glances directed at him, he claimed in his diary, 'the girls seated all around him. He had found a new passion. 'I have begun to think völkisch,' he wrote. 'It is a Weltanschauung, a philosophy of life.'

Pure chance had decreed that he emerge from his hibernation here on the far right, and not on the left. On August 21, 1924, nervous lest the Belgian authorities suddenly show up, he and Prang founded the local (Mönchen-Gladbach) branch of Graefe's movement (the prefix 'National Socialist' was still forbidden). Several friends joined at once. He made a ninety-minute speech and saw how the eyes of one youngster in the front began to glow.⁵⁴ These first meetings were held in Batze-Möhn's historical beerhall or at Caumann's in Augustastraße.⁵⁵ At least once in 1924 the Belgian occupation authorities did take him in for questioning. Show the interrogation record years later he would pride himself on his forerunner: 'It's all just as I think today. Nearly fifteen years ago, as a little agitator.'⁵⁶

Shortly after, he moved from Rheydt to Elberfeld. He later put it about that the occupation authorities had expelled him from their zone. He began, despite misgivings, to work for Wieggershaus, who had been subsidizing a political weekly called *Völkische Freiheit* (Folkish Freedom) since March 1924. Around this time Else returned to his life, arousing God and the Devil in his Catholic loins. 'Next to money,' he ruminates, 'Eros is what makes the world go round.'⁵⁸ More usefully, a typewriter also arrived, a machine whose intricacies seemed more easily mastered than those of women.⁵⁹ The first contributions signed by 'Dr G.' appeared in issue No. 24 dated September 13, 1924.⁶⁰ One was an article examining the concepts of National and Socialist (it concluded: 'We are nothing. Germany is everything!'). It was followed a week later by 'The Führer problem.'⁶¹ On October 4 his name appeared in the imprint for the first

time, as 'Dr Paul J. Goebbels'—a clue therein that he disliked the taint of 'Joseph.'

Hitler was still incarcerated in Landsberg prison. Meeting Gregor Strasser, the Nazi leader's burly viceroy, at Elberfeld on September 13 Goebbels asked him whether Hitler would soon be released. 'We are all missing him,' he confessed to his diary. In Hitler, whom he had yet to meet, he saw the unifying concept of the movement—'The fixed pole around which all national socialist thinking revolves.'⁶²

He was still flexing his muscles as a public speaker. He recognized in himself the elements of a 'ripe old demagogue' and set about refining his delivery.⁶³ Over the next year he would deliver no less than 189 speeches, learning to cast off all cant and phony philosophizing, becoming preacher, apostle, and agitator alike.⁶⁴ In his hands, he would write, he found that the soul of the German working man was as soft as wax, and he could knead it and mold it as he desired.

He soon fell out with Wiegiershaus. His proprietor wanted his little weekly to emphasize German nationalism. Goebbels preferred to put the socialism first. Soon three-quarters of the weekly was being written by Goebbels. By threatening to quit he bluffed Wiegiershaus into appointing him managing editor as from October 2, 1924. It was another rung up the ladder. 'Since yesterday,' he wrote the next day, 'I am quite a different person. At home too'—and what measure of relief lies in these words—'they look at me with quite different eyes.' He had his own mouthpiece. Upward to the stars, onward to freedom for Germany. God be at our side! These were the thrilling phrases that he inscribed in his diary.⁶⁵

Under Dr Paul J. Goebbels the weekly became readable and hard hitting. He was not happy with his writing style, but practice made perfect and his thoughts flowed fast and free. He installed a sub-office in his parental home. As his twenty-seventh birthday came and went his parents were astounded by the change. He still lounged around unshaven, but he had a sense of purpose. He increased his literary intake still more: he digested ten newspapers each day, and dealt with correspondence until two or three A.M. He began a new article, 'The basic problems of Jewry.'⁶⁶ His parents stopped nagging. His fame as orator and writer was noised across the Rhineland. True, he was not being paid, but this fame was gratification enough.

4: The Little Agitator

IN the May 1924 Parliamentary elections 1,918,329 people had voted for the right-wing parties' united front, giving them thirty-two of the 472 seats in the Reichstag; but of these only ten, under Greg Strasser, owed allegiance to Hitler. In the election of December 7 the right wing, now named the National Socialist Freedom movement, attracted only 907,242 votes: Fourteen MPs, with only five representing Hitler.

Writing after this reverse Goebbels encouraged his readers on December 20: 'There is no use denying it: We lost this battle, and the enemy triumphed all along the line.' He had intuitively perceived the correct propaganda tactic—ruthless depiction of the somberness of the hour. 'The Idea,' he continued, 'is worth any sacrifice, even the sacrifice of lives and property.' And then, in a pale pre-echo of his famous proclamations in the last days of his life, he hinted at the darkness that preceded each dawn: 'Every disaster at Jena is followed by a victory at Leipzig.'

The first rays of the new dawn appeared that same afternoon. Hitler arrived back at his Munich apartment, a free man again. Goebbels acclaimed him in his weekly's Political Diary, published on New Year's Day 1925: 'We greet thee, leader and hero, and there is an enormous joy and anticipation in us knowing that thou art again in our midst.'

Hitler's release from Landsberg threw his party into flux. Goebbels reassessed the conflict between the national and socialist elements of the party's program. He found it impossible to swallow the internationalist aspects of Marxism, but he hoped to steer the nationalist movement toward socialism, rather than see its socialist aspects drowned in mindless nationalism. In the Ruhr and Rhineland, he found many activists who thought like him—particularly the former members of the paramilitary Free Corps. Among these was Karl Kaufmann. Kaufmann, three years his junior, had organized N.S.D.A.P. *Ortsgruppen* (local groups) in several Ruhr cities until forced by the Prussian police to flee to Bavaria. Now he was back in Elberfeld, raising a political force aligned against the bourgeois, comfortably-off Wiegiershaus.

Goebbels too was evidently disillusioned with the folkish movement. In the final issue of his weekly, an anonymous advertisement appeared on January 17, 1925, announcing under Box R.26: 'Situation wanted: Editor, young, folkish, accustomed to work independently; good leader

writer, organizer, workaholic; unemployed because of political developments; seeks position, possibly in financial firm.' Three days later Wieggershaus invited him to resign, and he cast his lot with Kaufmann instead.

His personal life now was overshadowed by a humiliating lack of funds.¹ He was often unable to pay his rent or buy food, but when Kaufmann needed it desperately Goebbels proudly loaned him his last forty marks.² They became firm friends; Kaufmann was one of the very few men he addressed as *du*.³ But it was hard for him to make true friends, and he found his Alsatian dog more likable than many a human being; indeed, he began to hate the human race, as he often confessed in his diary.⁴ While his brother Konrad had now acquired a housemaid and a car, Joseph loathed the trappings of the bourgeoisie.⁵

~~His romantic escapades left him filled with self-hatred too.~~ Else now rarely wrote to him, having found him juvenile and adolescent. He had started a parallel relationship with another girl, Elisabeth Gensicke, but nothing came of it. 'From year to year,' he reflected, 'I shall be more and more lonely until I end up all alone without love and without a family.'⁶ That was his dread.

Comforting afterglows of his expired catholic faith still flickered. That March he dutifully hurried home to celebrate his Saint's Day in the family fold.⁷ His brother Hans was no longer welcome there as he had married outside the faith. This brought home to Joseph once more the impossibility of marrying the 'voluminous, chubby, healthy, cheerful' half-Jewess Else, although he did sometimes envisage it: 'I should like her as my wife—if only she were not half-blooded.'⁸

Thus he toyed with Elisabeth's affections. 'The poor child has gone to pieces over me,' he wrote in bemusement. 'She trembles with anguish and joy when she sees me.'⁹ He knew that tremor well. On April 20 a farewell letter came from Elisabeth—she could not stand it any longer. He replied with bleeding heart. 'And now,' he noted, 'this beautiful yet oh so ephemeral flowering dream is over. A great loneliness besets me.'¹⁰

DR GOEBBELS' party membership file is missing, but according to Karl Kaufmann he formally joined soon after Hitler had reconstituted the party in Munich on February 27, 1925.¹¹ In March Hitler activated a *Gau* (region) covering the North Rhineland. He appointed the middle-aged Baltic German journalist Axel Ripke as gauleiter. At Kaufmann's instance, Ripke appointed Goebbels his manager (*Geschäftsführer*); among Ripke's other officials were such personalities as the later notorious Erich Koch, one of Leo Schlageter's comrades, and the later commander of the Sturmabteilung (S.A.), the Brownshirts, Viktor Lutze. The Elberfeld police soon took note that 'Goebbels appears as speaker at every function' and directed the evenings organized by the Elberfeld Ortsgruppe of the N.S.D.A.P., whose Führer was identified as 'K. Kaufmann'.¹²

Ripke's gau ran into immediate difficulties. On March 17 the French occupation authorities in Düsseldorf banned the organization and a week

later arrested officials of its Elberfeld local.¹³ 'We request,' wrote Goebbels to the Reich minister for the occupied territories on April 3, 'that you take appropriate steps to secure the immediate release of our men from custody.'¹⁴ He had founded a local group at Krefeld, and often made speeches to them: One evening three Belgian detectives appeared, blocked the doors, and asked him if 'a Dr Goebbels' was in the house. Goebbels replied calmly, 'He's busy right now, I'm speaking on his behalf.' The officials left empty-handed.¹⁵

His radical views attracted the mistrust of other local officials. Arth Etterich, who had founded the Hattingen local three years before, likened him to Maximilien de Robespierre; Ripke agreed, and cited Honoré de Mirabeau's estimation of Robespierre: 'The man is dangerous—he believes what he says.'¹⁶ Neither Goebbels nor Kaufmann felt that their gauleiter, Ripke, was a match for the French. He was too old, too conservative, and too diplomatic.¹⁷ Suppressing the actual epithet, Goebbels wrote: 'You can't stage a revolution with —s like these.'¹⁸ But Ripke had Hitler's ear, and often traveled to Berlin to deal with Greg Strasser, Hitler's deputy in all of northern Germany.

Goebbels conceived the idea of a fanatical Freedom League (Freiheitsbund) of thirty members pledged to donate a fixed amount each month—a sort of 'intellectual storm troop' as he put it.¹⁹ Ripke was dismissive, but the first whip round at Hattingen yielded 268 marks. For hours Goebbels plotted with Kaufmann ways of getting rid of the tedious, bourgeois gauleiter.²⁰ He had a long talk with Ripke on May 1, which ended, if Goebbels is to be believed, with the gauleiter on his knees pleading for a second chance. The gauleiter accused him of promoting a new class-struggle. 'Too true!' commented Goebbels: 'With capitalism you've got to call a spade a spade.'²¹ After another five-hour session with Ripke he summed up their differences: 'Socialism means the liberation of the proletariat, not just breaking the Versailles peace treaty. Goebbels preserve my passion!'²² He was beginning to hate Ripke, and this feeling was mutual. The one wanted bourgeois reform, the other socialist revolution.²³

In Munich, Hitler had revived the Party newspaper *Völkischer Beobachter*, and Alfred Rosenberg, its editor, invited Goebbels to submit occasional pieces from May.²⁴ He wrote by day and made speeches at night. He did not flinch from the ugly scenes that often resulted. After he spoke at a flag-dedication ceremony at Remscheid on June 5 there was a battle with communists in the railroad tunnel, and the police arrested 150 of his opponents. 'I was in the thick of it,' he chortled. 'The two factions went berserk and waded into each other. What a way to Organize a Nation!'²⁵

WHILE Else was away on vacation in the summer of 1925 he made use of her best friend Alma.²⁶ In mid-August he received a promising postcard from Alma which he described as the first sign after 'that night.' 'The teasing, enchanting Alma,' he mused. 'I rather like this creature.' Such

romantic interludes were a cheap opium against the pangs of poverty: his landlord gave him notice to quit his lodgings at No. 122 Gesundheit Strasse (Health Street) in Elberfeld.²⁷ His parents had sent him 150 marks.²⁸ 'Damn and blast!' he let fly in his diary, and an unkind Fate, hearing him, responded with a final tax demand for 150 marks.

Once he spoke at Recklinghausen, Anka's hometown, and he half hoped to see her sitting there among his enraptured audience. Those audiences were getting larger. The *Völkischer Beobachter* (VB) reported regularly on his speeches. Together with Viktor Lutze, the region's S.A. commander, he spoke to three thousand packing the big concert hall in Essen. A truckload of young right-wingers known as the Falcons drove him home.²⁹ Two days later on August 25 the French occupation troops finally pulled out of the Rhineland.

The first volume of Hitler's *Mein Kampf* had just been published, and Goebbels along with twenty thousand others was dipping into it.³⁰ There was much that he disagreed with. He learned that on July 12 his gauleiter Ripke had blackened his name to Hitler as a 'bolshevist.' Goebbels fought back, accusing Ripke of embezzling party funds; this was one offense the party would not tolerate. On July 12 Hitler called all the party's gauleiters of northern Germany to Weimar, and it was in a beerhall here that day that he and Goebbels first briefly met.³¹ 'Ripke is finished,' Goebbels wrote after an internal committee of inquiry had been set up, with Strasser presiding.³² Ripke resigned, leaving Kaufmann, Lutze, and Goebbels in charge.

One day in midsummer Strasser came to see him. Strasser had earlier been gauleiter of Lower Bavaria, and in the failed 1923 putsch his stormtroopers had held the Isar bridges. With his rough-hewn features, he was the stereotype Bavarian; but he was shrewd, ambitious, and one of the cleverest in the Nazi hierarchy. Probably he recognized in Goebbels a useful lieutenant whose politics were similar to his own. He certainly won Goebbels over. 'He has a wonderful sense of humor,' recorded the latter after this meeting. 'Related a lot of sorry things about Munich and about the swine at party HQ there. Hitler is surrounded by the wrong people; I think Hermann Esser [Hitler's propaganda chief] is his undoing.'³³ Strasser revealed that he was planning to consolidate the party's organization in north-western Germany, and he would want Goebbels to edit a new journal as a weapon against Munich.

This was fighting talk, and Goebbels liked it. Gregor Strasser would become his first real employer: then his sworn rival: and ultimately his mortal enemy.

WHEN Strasser's conclave took place, in the grimy Ruhr town of Hagen on September 10, Gregor himself could not attend as his mother was ill.³⁴ But those who did were the toughest men the party had in northern Germany, including many former Free Corps officers. Dr Robert Ley, thirty-five, a former aviator and now an industrial chemist, had directed the South Rhineland gau (around Cologne) since mid-July; Professor

Theodor Vahlen, fifty-six, was gauleiter of Pomerania; Hinrich Lohse, a businessman, twenty-eight, who headed the northernmost gau, Schleswig-Holstein; Franz von Pfeffer, thirty-seven, who had been condemned to death by the French but had escaped, gauleiter of Westphalia since March; Ludolf Haase, gauleiter of south Hanover; and his deputy Hermann Fobke, who had spent some months in Landsberg with Hitler.

Fobke's report is in party files.³⁵ He felt that the 'sharp intellect' Goebbels, whom he called the gau Führer of the north Rhineland, called for thorough analysis, 'as he does not seem all that trustworthy at first sight.' Goebbels however was delighted at the outcome, telling his diary: 'We pulled everything off.' By that he meant that the regions of northern and western Germany would henceforth operate as a bloc under Strasser's centralized command, with his office at Elberfeld and 'a centralized management (moi).' Only Ley had quibbled.

Seventeen days later, on September 27, two hundred men from the Ruhr's local groups met at Düsseldorf to decide who should replace Ripke.³⁶ Goebbels hoped the choice would fall on him. But Kaufmann was 'unanimously elected' as gauleiter, with Goebbels merely managing as before.³⁷ It was some consolation that the audience bore him out from the hall on their shoulders. He desperately wanted to be loved.³⁸

FOR the next thirteen months he was Kaufmann's roving agitator. Sometimes he felt ill-used, and cast a jealous, almost womanly eye over all his rivals for the gauleiter's affection. But editing Gregor Strasser's influential new fortnightly journal *National Socialist Letters* more than compensated him. It enabled his voice to be heard far from Elberfeld. The journal's masthead proclaimed it as the work of 'leading members of the movement.'³⁹ He would edit the first thirty-nine issues. Its four, or eight pages, sometimes carried contributions by Heinrich Himmler, Franz von Pfeffer, and Strasser's bombastic younger brother Otto. But above all Goebbels used it as his platform to argue his own socialist and antisemitic brand of politics. In the second issue he published a letter to 'my friend on the left,' arguing: 'You and I, we fight one another although we are not real enemies at all.'⁴⁰ This was a trenchant theme in all his writings, and was his somewhat ritualized affection for Russia: in the fourth issue he proclaimed, 'we can see the commencement of our own national and socialist survival in an alliance with a truly national and socialist Russia.'

When Gustav Stresemann signed the Locarno pact of nonaggression with France and Belgium (guaranteed by Britain and Italy) Goebbels was therefore appalled. An ugly vision seized him—of Germany's so-called dying in the service of western capitalism, 'possibly, even probably, some "Holy War" against Moscow!'⁴² 'We shall be the mercenaries against Russia,' he repeated gloomily a week later, 'on the battlefields of capitalism. . . . We're done for.'⁴³

The *Letters* were an undeniable success. Goebbels advertised them in other party publications, calling upon all National Socialists of western and north Germany to pay a 1.50 mark quarterly subscription. 'Thus,' 1

found, 'we've got our hands on a unique instrument of power.' According to the journal's accountant Paul Schmitz he received 150 marks a month as editor.⁴⁴ The *Letters* gave the party a sense of direction. In his sixth issue Goebbels held forth on the N.S.D.A.P.'s need to radicalize socialism. He set this out at greater length in a standard speech, 'Lenin or Hitler,' which he first delivered (according to Prussian police records) in Hanover on September 17, 1925;⁴⁵ he delivered it scores of times afterwards, inspiring violent clashes in the 'Red' cities like Altona and Chemnitz, and fervent acclaim in Berlin, Dresden, Plauen, Zwickau, and elsewhere.⁴⁶ It was heavy on the theory and history, but still seized the imagination of his listeners, said Albert Krebs, a Party official in Hamburg.⁴⁷ 'We Germans,' declared Goebbels, 'are the unluckiest people God's sun shines upon. Sixty millions of us, surrounded by enemies, bleeding from a thousand wounds, the hardest-working nation on earth, and we see our only political exercise as being to tear ourselves limb from limb.' Because their leaders had failed to win over the working classes they had been thrown into the arms of the left; and here the 'systematic underminer of any true workers' movement, the marxist Jew,' had easily led them astray.

'We allowed ourselves to be humiliated at conference after conference,' continued Goebbels, 'in a way we wouldn't have dared humiliate even a nigger nation, and nobody came and thundered the word No! The Ruhr was occupied: the German people hid its bourgeois cowardice behind passive resistance. The Ruhr was lost—and Mr Gustav Stresemann espied a "silver lining" on the horizon. . . . Stresemann's fat hand signed everything our grinning enemies laid before him.' 'Then,' he shrieked, 'came Locarno, and Gustav Stresemann trotted off to London and signed that too.' Locarno, he argued, meant not peace but war. He foresaw a gigantic armed struggle against the Soviet Union using German blood. 'And presiding over it all is the Jew, both in the ranks of world capitalism and concealed in Soviet bolshevism, egging on the Russians and Germans against each other . . . in one last orgy of hostilities.'

He introduced Lenin to his by now seething audiences in surprisingly warm terms, as a man who had learned all about social deprivation the hard way. 'Capitalism,' he declared, 'is the immoral distribution of capital.' Nazism made a distinction between creative state capital and a grasping international loan capital. 'Germany will become free,' he promised, 'at that moment when the thirty millions on the left and the thirty millions on the right make common cause.' 'Only one movement is capable of doing this: National Socialism, embodied in one Führer—Adolf Hitler.'

5: God Disposes Otherwise

FOR a while Karl Kaufmann was, after Else, the best friend Goebbels had. But Gregor Strasser was the man he most admired five years his senior. Strasser was willing to adopt the radical program that Goebbels espoused.¹ He could use Strasser as a battering ram against Munich. They were not of course fighting Hitler himself but the toadying parasites surrounding him in Munich and in particular the party's propaganda chief Hermann Esser. Munich hinted that Goebbels might like to go down there. The hints fell on deaf ears. Together with Strasser he intended to build his power base between the Rhine and the Ruhr.²

1925
It is legitimate to ask whether his proletarian stance was mere posturing. His private writings do show a marked sympathy with the working class. His contempt for the 'bourgeois scum' in the party, toasting their toadying parasitism as he engagingly put it, was genuine. 'I find it appalling he would write, 'that we and the communists are bashing each other's heads in.'³

He now drew audiences of two and three thousand with ease. Often there were as many thugs outside, armed with firearms too. At Düsseldorf on October 8, 1925 communists for miles around invaded his meeting but within minutes he had silenced them and he went on to hold them in his grip for two hours.⁴ He drafted in his own hand a cute pamphlet entitled *The Little a.b.c. of National Socialism*, as a catechism for the party. He completed it on October 26 and his friend Director Arnold, a wealthy Hattingen industrialist, put up the capital for a first print of ten thousand.

His personal affairs were in chaos. He was living a gypsy existence, changing trains and lodgings with almost equal frequency.⁶ He was driving himself to the limit. His diary entries often end with a motif that remains unchanged for years—of dropping off exhausted to bed, for only a few hours' sleep. He crisscrossed his tough industrial domain, painfully slow local trains, setting eyes also on Lübeck, Hamburg ('redolent of ocean and America'), the Ruhr cities smoldering in their infernal polluted semi-darkness, and Hamburg again ('German swamps and German enterprise, exploited by the Jews').⁷

He wished he had hearth, home, and family to greet him at Elberfeld but he found permanent relations with women difficult to achieve.⁸ He placed these remote creatures on a sort of pedestal. He was not averse to exploiting them himself, but was profoundly indignant when he saw

Hamburg's red-light district around the Reeperbahn, with the half-naked hookers standing in their doorways. A local party official later recalled that one keen young S.A. man asked, 'Doctor, what'll we do with streets like this after the revolution?', and Goebbels snarled in reply: 'We shall sweep them away like the garbage that they are!'⁹ He saw Germany's blonde girls embracing slit-eyed Chinamen in the street; the police just stood by grinning.¹⁰

He seldom took his women to his meetings, and no longer sent his writings to them either. After Else wrote him a despairing letter shortly before Christmas he lamented, 'Why can't women be like us? Can they be educated? Or are they by their very nature inferior?'¹¹ 'There is a curse cast over you and women,' he told himself piteously five days later. 'Woe betide those who love you!'¹²

His diaries are still punctuated with wailing references to Anka. But these ululations are surely no more than an affectation. Anka had joined the Undead. Sometimes he journeyed through her town, Weimar, but he made no attempt to visit. Once he took pen and paper and wrote to all his women friends. He hated himself as soon as he mailed the letter to her. She did not reply.¹³ His diaries did not resist human nature's tendency to gild the lily: a riot at one meeting left one injured man, who died in hospital, but Goebbels' diary speaks of two dead. Two audiences estimated at fifteen hundred by the *VB* became 'three thousand' in the diary.¹⁴ While the newspapers referred to one shot being fired at an Essen meeting, the diary turned it into 'shooting.'¹⁵ But he was writing for effect. The early diaries were composed in a lively vernacular, often difficult to convey in translation. Most prevalent in their pages was his sense of loneliness, his happiness when a cheering audience chaired him out onto the street. But one constant in his life was so ever-present that he only rarely referred to it—the pain from his crippled foot, which no doctor seemed able to dispel.

ON October 12 a letter came from Gregor Strasser reporting that Hitler mistrusted Goebbels and had even cursed his name. Goebbels wondered if he should quit. He planned to tackle Hitler about the Party's program when he came to Dortmund on October 24. In preparation, he finished reading *Mein Kampf*. 'Who is this man?' he exclaimed, strangely impressed: 'Half plebeian, half God. Is he Jesus Christ himself or just Saint John?' But it was not easy arranging an appointment with a messiah; Carl Severing, the Prussian minister of the interior,¹⁶ forbade Hitler to speak anywhere in Prussia, so the violent Dortmund meeting went ahead without him. Hitler attempted to reach Hamm next day, but Severing issued an arrest warrant and he turned back. Strasser spoke instead.¹⁷

When Hitler came to Brunswick, which was outside Prussia, for a regional convention in November, Goebbels saw him again—this was their second meeting.¹⁸ It was November 4, 1925. With Bernhard Rust, he secured a six-thirty P.M. appointment with Hitler.

And now the pain became an accessory to the hatred

Its old Catholicism, aroused by those former streets turned into the white legs of pupae, wholly pure, wholly full of hatred

He is a man of the street

He's just having a meal [recorded Goebbels]. At once he jumps his feet and shakes my hand like an old friend. And those big blue eyes of his! Like stars! He's pleased to see me. I am in transports of delight. After ten minutes he withdraws. Then he has his speech ready outline.

Meanwhile I am driven over to the meeting, and speak for two hours. Huge applause, and then shouts of Heil and applause: he is there. He shakes my hand. He is still completely exhausted after his own great speech. Then he speaks here for half an hour too. With wit, irony, humor, and sarcasm, with seriousness, with fervor, with passion. The man's got everything to be a king. The born popular leader! The coming dictator.

Afterwards he waited outside Hitler's door hoping to speak to him, but he was fobbed off with a third handshake.¹⁹ This fell some way short of the heart-to-heart talk he had planned.

At his own meetings the communist violence was getting out of hand. They often ended with riots, with shattered beer mugs and splintered furniture. At Chemnitz on November 18 he put his views on Lenin and Hitler to two thousand communists, who listened in silence. There thousand beer glasses were smashed, 150 people were injured and a man (or two) killed.²⁰ Two days later he met Hitler again, in Saxony. Hitler invited him to speak first ("How small I feel!"), then presented him with his photograph inscribed with greetings to the Rhineland. The framed portrait would remain on Goebbels' desk until the very hour he died.²¹

On Thursday November 26, 1925 he arrived in Berlin for the first time. His impressions were overwhelming: The vast sea of houses and buildings, the polyglot population, the bustle, the police with their helmets and truncheons. Berlin was a 'sinful Babel' of brick, stone, and concrete. Goebbels addressed that night an audience of thousands—did not note how many or where. Everybody was there, including the Strasser brothers (he found Otto as 'decent' as Gregor), Gottfried Feder, the party's chief theoretician, and Dr Wilhelm Frick, the lawyer who had connived at Hitler's 1923 putsch from within Munich police HQ. The Nazi party here in Berlin was weak, probably less than one thousand names. Dr Ernst Schlange, a civil servant, was the local gauleiter. He had lost an arm and half his face in the war. 'They say he's a pacifist,' commented Goebbels laconically.²² Visiting the Reichstag building, he was repelled by the spectacle of these parliamentarians ('Jews and their jackals') in their natural habitat. He dismissed the politicians in his diatribe with an obscenity and claimed to have felt such nausea that he had to flee. Afterwards he paid a social visit to Helene Bechstein of the millionaire piano-manufacturing family. The Bechsteins were among Hitler's earliest backers. A few days later the Prussian political police section opened their first dossier on Goebbels.

1921

The Albertus Magnus Society revalued the ancient debt he owed them and on December 7, 1925 mailed a claim for repayment to his old lodgings in Cologne. It was returned marked 'gone away.' It was not that he was lying low. On November 15 he had stage-managed the homecoming of the remains of Ludwig Knickmann, a nationalist shot by Belgian occupation troops at Sterkrade in June 1923; he spoke at the funeral in Knickmann's native town, Buer.²³ Three weeks later he staged an even bigger ceremony in Leo Schlageter's honour.²⁴ Not for nothing had he read Richard Wagner's *The Art of Directing*.²⁵ Fifteen hundred (Goebbels wrote two thousand) brownshirted S.A. men paraded out to the deserted, snowflecked heathland spot where the French had pun Schlageter to death. Then, to the throb of muffled drums, the entire force marched down Düsseldorf's most expensive boulevard, the Königsallee.

The public acclaim was in sharp contrast to the frosty silence Goebbels met from his parents. At Rheydt he found that his father had bought a radio set—'the modern mind-narrowing device,' scoffed his son, oblivious of the role that radio would play in his later life. 'Everything piped in! The philistine's ideal!'²⁶ But Goebbels had a new father-figure on his horizon. That Christmas Hitler sent him a leather-bound *Mein Kampf* inscribed with a tribute to the 'exemplary manner' of his fight.²⁷

At a Hanover conference of the north-western bloc on November 22 Gregor Strasser agreed that Goebbels should draft a new program. Goebbels spent most of December on it, since it had to be ready for their next gauleiters' conference in Hanover. The redrafting was harder than he had anticipated.²⁸ In its final form it comprised twenty-four basic demands, all of them militantly anti-bourgeois: The party would respect private property, but nationalize all heavy industry and the great estates. Meanwhile Goebbels set about literary projects of his own, including a portrait gallery of political personalities, and a collection of his own political letters, *The Second Revolution*.²⁹

To his discomfiture, when he arrived for the Hanover meeting on January 24, 1926 he found that Hitler had sent Gottfried Feder to attend and observe. The debate on Goebbels' 'Elberfeld Guidelines' lasted all next day. There was criticism of his lenient approach to Russia and the communists.³⁰ He went outside, smoked a cigarette, spoke for an hour, then saw the program adopted. According to Kaufmann, Goebbels was not sparing in his criticism of Hitler and Munich. According to Otto Strasser, he even climbed on a chair and proposed that the 'petit-bourgeois' Hitler be expelled from the party.³¹ According to Rosenberg, he shrieked: 'Hitler has betrayed socialism!'³² Afterwards Strasser pumped his hand—and Feder left to report to Hitler.

Concerned about this ugly trend, Hitler sent for Strasser; Strasser phoned Goebbels afterward, saying that 'Wolf'—Hitler's sobriquet—was 'coming round to their point of view,' but was going to call a conclave of all Germany's gauleiters at Bamberg, on his own home ground. Totally misreading the situation, Goebbels was delighted. 'In Bamberg,' he decided, 'we shall act the coy beauty, and seduce Hitler into our camp.'³³

* He dreams of taking it all over

~~He dreams of taking it all over~~

1925 At Bamberg on the appointed day, Sunday February 14, he met Gre-
 Strasser early and they agreed their plan of action before walking over
 the meeting. Hitler drove grandly past, before halting his chauffeur &
 offering Goebbels his hand. The young man took it, but the laugh v
 on him. Hitler had packed the audience with loyal local officials:
 spoke for four hours about high politics and diplomacy, and Goebb
 thought it prudent, on balance, to keep his mouth shut. He heard Hit
 oppose all thought of dispossessing the princes and landed aristocr
 (they were of course prominent among his backers). 'For us,' ru
 Hitler, 'there are no "princes," only Germans.' He forbade all furtl
 discussion of the party program: It had been sanctified by the blood
 the party's first martyrs.

I am quite stunned [wrote Goebbels the next day]. What kind of
 Hitler is this? A reactionary? Astonishingly clumsy and unsure
 himself. The Russian question—he misses the point entirely. Italy a
 England 'are our natural allies.' Awful! 'Our mission is to sm~~ash~~
 bolshevism. Bolshevism is a Jewish sham! We are to disinherit 1
 Russians!' All 180 millions of them!!!

He recorded that Feder, Ley, Streicher, and Esser all nodded approval
 Strasser lost his nerve and spoke only haltingly—'Good old home-
 Strasser, *ach Gott*, we are no match at all for these swine down here!
 Goebbels returned to Elberfeld full of doubts, both about himself a
 about Adolf Hitler. Strasser in fact panicked: he circularized all the
 gauleiters asking them to return to him for destruction every single co-
 of the Goebbels guidelines. Goebbels now had the reputation of a slippery
 intriguer, an opportunist. People called him the 'chap with the tiny, col
 monkey's paws.'³⁵ Behind his back at Bamberg Streicher called him
 'dangerous.'³⁶ Learning of this from Fobke, Goebbels fired off a furious
 handwritten letter to Streicher: 'I am informed that you said ... that
 nobody knew where I come from or what I am really up to in t
 movement.' What right, he challenged, had Streicher 'of all people'
 cast aspersions on him?³⁷ He even wrote to Hitler complaining abo
 Streicher's calumny.

But Bamberg had brought a parting of the ways for Goebbels. He was
 shifting his loyalty from Strasser to Hitler, though unconsciously and
 imperceptibly at first. In the next issue of *Letters* he emulated Hitler's
 condemnation of the demand by other nationalist organizations for
 boycott of Italy for her oppression of the German community in th
 South Tyrol.³⁸

Returning from a trip to East Prussia to Essen, grimy capital of the
 Ruhr, he found it decked out in swastika flags for the party rally o
 March 6. Four thousand members filled the concert hall.³⁹ The delegat
 agreed to the proposal that there should be one large Ruhr gau, am
 gamating the smaller Rhineland and Westphalian gaus, with Pfeffe
 Kaufmann, and Goebbels jointly in command.⁴⁰ Goebbels bulks large
 in his own diary version of this meeting than in the official minute

Seems
 J.G.
 decided
 to
 switch
 allegiance

12

which mention him only once—when he read out a bland telegram from Hitler. 'The bad,' said Hitler, 'must not be allowed to enslave the good.'⁴¹ This was a precept that both men were to overlook in the years ahead.

A few days later Hitler flattered Kaufmann, Goebbels, and Lutze with invitations to speak in Munich. He pressed lavish treatment on the three: The motor car, that shibboleth of Nazi Germany, played an important part in this softening-up process, for they found Hitler's magnificent Mercedes waiting to drive them to their hotel. According to Otto Strasser the wealth and power that this vehicle represented clinched it for Goebbels. Hitler loaned it to them with a chauffeur to drive them down to Lake Starnberg for an afternoon. His men had put up posters advertising Goebbels' speech (on 'National Socialism or Communism') at the famous Bürgerbräu beerhall. Hitler embraced him before the audience, amid cheers and tumult, and Goebbels noticed tears in his eyes.⁴²

*
Goebbels
noticed the
young woman
smiled at him

Over dinner he took in the unfamiliar faces around him—Hitler's 'decent, calm, friendly, clever, reserved' private secretary Rudolf Hess; his meticulous treasurer Franz Xaver Schwarz; his diminutive general manager Philipp Bouhler. Hitler showed them over the new party HQ at No. 50 Schelling Strasse, and again talked of Italy and Britain as future allies and warned of the danger from Russia. On April 9 Hitler signed an Ausweis (certificate) for the three to run the Ruhr gau until further notice.⁴³

Goebbels took flowers round to Hitler the next morning and they talked again about foreign policy. 'His case is compelling. But I think he has still not quite sized up the problem of Russia.' Nonetheless, the two men were finding each other. 'I strongly urge you,' Goebbels wrote to Gregor Strasser on April 19, 'to arrange to talk things over with Hitler as soon as possible.' That day he and Hitler drove up to Stuttgart to speak at two meetings and again Hitler flung his arms around him. 'Adolf Hitler,' the young man wrote mushily in his diary back at Elberfeld, 'I love you: because you are great and simple at the same time—what we call a genius.'⁴⁴

He returned to Munich for the party's annual general meeting at the Bürgerbräu on May 21. The minutes show that 657 party members were present. Goebbels recorded that he was greeted with a 'storm of joy and enthusiasm.' The minutes were less lyrical. They show that Hitler mentioned him only once in his two-hour statement:

'I am glad to say that this year has seen several first-class speakers come to the fore, with our friend Goebbels from Elberfeld out in front [applause].'⁴⁵

Goebbels put it more vividly. 'He publicly lauded me to the skies,' he recorded.

THE regional headquarters had moved into a suite of five rooms at No. 8 Auerschule Strasse in Elberfeld.⁴⁶ Goebbels was not happy with his own position in the gau however. On June 6 the local party officials (*Bezirk*

leaders) held a meeting to resolve which of the three should be acting gauleiter. The choice fell on Kaufmann. Lutze hinted to Goebbels that Kaufmann had rigged the vote with the help of Koch and Joseph T. Boven.⁴⁷ Disappointed, Goebbels decided to leave the Ruhr. He traveled to Berlin two days later, ostensibly to speak at Spandau and Neukö, in fact to talk things over with Gauleiter Schlange. Several of Schlange's men asked Goebbels to take over. He declined, unable to decide between Munich and Berlin.

FOR the time being he is still preoccupied with the opposite sex. *They* are a welcome distraction from work, a habit rather like the cigar smoking which he now finds impossible to give up. On June 10, 1926 receives a letter from Else Janke, the first of several Dear-John letters from her. He asks his diary callously, 'Has the right moment now come for dumping this half-Jewess will make way for other less compromising females and for his own possible transfer to Munich away from political intrigues in Elberfeld.

His roving eye appraises every handsome woman regardless of social or marital standing and indeed why not? He is young and eligible. 'Opposite me,' he writes one July day in a Berchtesgaden hotel, 'sit beautiful, beautiful woman.' He spends three days stalking this gorgeous brunette—'she stays demure, and I am a silly ass. I am chasing her like a schoolboy.'⁴⁹

That same day, as he is visiting the Obersalzberg for the first time, a carriage blocks the narrow mountain lane, immobilized by a broken axle. A blonde country wench is unable to get past until he stands in front of the horses. 'Oh what a beauty you are,' he remarks in his diary. *She* laughs out loud and waves to me long after. We write her a little note; the coachman's lad takes it back to her—asking her to make a signal the morrow.⁵⁰ That is the last he hears of her.

He accepts defeat, aware of his cruel handicap. 'My foot bothers me a lot,' he writes. 'I can't stop thinking about it.' 'Every woman,' he writes helplessly, 'goes straight to my blood. I chase around like a starving wolf. But I am bashful as a child.'⁵¹

HE had all but found his way to Hitler.

Hitler had come north for the first time, spending the third week of June 1926 in the Ruhr and Rhineland, where he addressed private audiences at Elberfeld, Bochum, and Ruhr industrialists at Essen. In Essen he also spoke to two thousand, and met Director Arnold, the local financial backer. Goebbels studied the Nazi leader closely, seeing him alternately as a likable human being, as a towering intellect, and as a wayward, willful character. He studied his talents for gesture, mimicry and oratory. 'A born agitator,' he concluded. 'One could conquer the world with that man.'⁵² Before leaving the Ruhr on the nineteenth Hitler finally ruled that Kaufmann should be the sole gauleiter. Goebbels could ill conceal his chagrin.⁵³

It encouraged him therefore that at the party's first annual rally for three years, held at Weimar on July 3-4, 1926, the contingent from Berlin liked him (the capital had sent four companies of S.A. stormtroopers); it provided an added impetus that one of the Berliners, Josephine von Behr, an affectionate girl who had plied him with chocolates in Berlin in February, was there too.⁵⁴ His own prepared talk on propaganda had Hitler in stitches.⁵⁵ Hitler himself talked on politics, ideologies, and organization. The photographs show Goebbels limping at his side through Weimar's cobbled streets, wearing a jacket buttoned just beneath his tieknot. He claimed that fifteen thousand men were in the march-past; the party's history would speak of ten thousand. The pictures suggest a smaller turn out.

He willingly accepted Hitler's invitation to the Obersalzberg a few days after Weimar. Emil Maurice, Hitler's chauffeur, drove them out to the idyllic Lake Königssee; Hess and his girlfriend Ilse came too. Up at his still modest mountain villa Hitler dilated on Germany's social and racial questions; Goebbels fell in love with him all over again and decided that here was the creator of the Third Reich: 'Catlike—crafty, clever, skillful, compassionate; but like a lion too, roaring and larger than life.'⁵⁶ Infected by this prolonged exposure to his idol, Goebbels saw in the sky a white cloud shaped like a swastika; it could only be a portent of his destiny. 'Now,' wrote Goebbels, hypnotized, leaving him on July 25, 'the last doubts in me have vanished. Germany will live! Heil Hitler!'⁵⁷

HIS brain awchirl with these impressions, he is still nursing Hitler's farewell bouquet of red roses as he boards the overnight train back to the Rhineland. A beautiful woman shares his compartment. She talks engagingly with him, and they arrange to meet in Düsseldorf on the morrow. He limps around the city for two hours searching for her, but without luck.

'God has disposed otherwise,' he writes afterwards, finding the Divinity a useful alibi for his own shortcomings.⁵⁸

✱ But all the descriptions
together. See, for example,
pp 38, 34, 33

by The Editors



II: The Gauleiter of Berlin

From the time he was a young man, Goebbels had been a member of the German Workers' Party, and he had been one of its most active members. He had been a member of the party since 1924, and he had been one of its most active members since that time. He had been a member of the party since 1924, and he had been one of its most active members since that time.

He had already earned a name for the party, and he had been one of its most active members. He had been a member of the party since 1924, and he had been one of its most active members since that time. He had been a member of the party since 1924, and he had been one of its most active members since that time.

In 1928, he became a member of the party, and he had been one of its most active members. He had been a member of the party since 1924, and he had been one of its most active members since that time. He had been a member of the party since 1924, and he had been one of its most active members since that time.

6: The Opium Den

SHOULD he accept the job as the new gauleiter of Berlin? It was no sinecure. With around ten thousand supporters the communist party was aggressively in the ascendant. The N.S.D.A.P.'s Berlin gau had been founded in February 1925 and had attracted only 137 votes in the municipal elections that October. The present gauleiter had lost his stomach for the fight. He was however one of the joint backers of the Strasser brothers' Kampf Verlag publishing house, which had begun issuing a proletarian newspaper, the *Berliner Arbeiterzeitung*, in March 1926; this sold some three thousand copies each week.¹

Unable to contain the snarling militancy of the Berlin S.A. under Kurt Daluge, Dr Schlange retired on June 20. Deputizing for him, Erich Schmiedicke called a meeting of the district officers in Gregor Strasser's presence and secured a unanimous vote that they should invite Dr Goebbels to come from the Ruhr to take over. The Berlin political police, who had agents planted in the Nazi party, recorded prematurely on July 29 that he had been offered the gau but had turned it down.² Goebbels wrote to Otto Strasser on August 3 that he was still undecided: 'Should I, or should I not? Probably not.'

The rumors of his probable defection from Strasser's to Hitler's camp led to rumbles of discontent. Gregor Strasser, who had set the wheels in motion to lure him to Berlin, later remarked ruefully in his Franconian dialect, '*A saublöder Obernarr bin i' g'wesen!* (What a bloody fool I've been). 'Friend Gregor Strasser is pretty jealous of me,' observed Goebbels. Lying to his own diary, he denied a few days later that he was selling out to Hitler. He blamed Karl Kaufmann's men for starting the 'legend,' and the Strasser brothers for giving it wider currency. 'I'll teach the lot of them!' he added darkly.³

He had already acquired a taste for the rough and tumble of radical politics. He led a raiding party on a theatre staging an award-winning but anti-German play by Carl Zuckmayer. Goebbels' Nazis hurled stink bombs into the audience and he was disappointed that only five women swooned.⁴

In Berlin, the battles would be uglier. Here the ramshackle and impoverished local party was in crisis. On August 26 there was a rowdy gathering of its officials, around 120 people according to the police. Schmiedicke, standing in as gauleiter, was hooted down by the S.A. The chief of the Berlin S.S.—the Schutzstaffel, an elite emerging within the

1926

44 II: THE GAULEITER OF BERLIN

stormtroopers—shouted that he had just spoken by phone with Hitler and been given full powers, which he promptly used to 'disarm Schmiedicke'.⁵ The next day Munich formally asked Goebbels to move in Berlin, but only as a stop-gap.

He was still in two minds. Playing for time, he sent what he called 'semi-refusal' to Hitler.⁶

HE spends a weekend at Bayreuth in September 1926. Here he briefly in love with Winifred Wagner's young and vivacious daughter romps around in the hay with the youngest of them ('the sweetest little brat') for an hour and then purples with embarrassment before others.⁷ 'I often wish I had such a darling German female around, laments—then remembers young Josephine von Behr in Berlin.' prospect of seeing her excites him, and he returns there in mid-September.⁸

In Berlin he spends an evening alone with Dr Schlange and Schmiedicke. Both men plead with him to take over.⁹ In two minds still visits the party's primitive HQ at No. 189 Potsdamer Strasse. It is housed in a gloomy downstairs room at the rear—a windowless vault lit only by a naked bulb, he will later report, in which Schmiedicke sits hunched over his cash ledger struggling to make ends meet.¹⁰ A cloud of stale and tobacco smoke hits him as he goes in. Newspapers are stacked around the walls. Out of work party members are loitering around; there are 270,000 unemployed in Berlin alone—chain-smoking and tit-tattling. They called it the 'opium den.'

He is glad to get out to Potsdam with Josephine that evening. They reverently tread the same sod as Frederick the Great and stroll around Sanssouci park. Goebbels wants to hold her hand, but lacks the courage to try.¹¹

The affair with Else is over. They meet one Sunday in Cologne and trade insults, and she writes him another farewell letter. Goebbels sends his sister Maria over to fetch her on Monday morning for one final scene. With tear-streaked face, Else accompanies him in the drizzle to the train. For some reason Goebbels dramatizes their final parting in his diary:

'The train draws away. Else turns around and weeps. I close the window. Rain is falling on the coach roof. I have gone out of her life. My heart is broken.'¹²

AMPLIFYING Goebbels' own unpublished diaries, the Nazi party archives acquired a file of vivid monthly résumés on the Berlin gau written by a young activist called Reinhold Muchow, who had joined aged twenty-two in December 1925.¹³ These reports show the methods to which the party resorted, including a barrage of defamatory propaganda, ceaseless rowdy demonstrations, mindless provocations, and violence for its own sake. The party already had three 'martyrs' in Berlin—Willi Dreyer killed in 1924, Werner Doelle in 1925, and now on September 26, 1926 the first

four year old Harry Anderssen, murdered by a communist gang in Kreuzberg.¹⁴ It was a tragedy for the Berlin gau, recorded Muchow in October 1926, that it had never had a real *leader*. Dr Schlange had made no headway against the internal bickering. Schmiedicke proved even less capable. The opposition—Kurt Daluege and the S.A.—had put forward their own candidate as gauleiter, Oskar Hauenstein. Every top-level meeting ended with a row.¹⁵

Goebbels began feeling his way into Berlin. October 9 found him speaking at the party's Mark Brandenburg Freedom Rally, a torchlight parade just outside the city in Potsdam. The police file shows that he called for the destruction of the present state. The Berliners roared approval. 'You yourself will have noticed,' wrote Schmiedicke encouragingly, 'how very keenly every member of the party in Berlin wants you as their leader.'¹⁶ His mind already made up, Goebbels told him that the stumbling block was financial: if the terms were right he would accept the job.¹⁷ Schmiedicke bowed to his demands.¹⁸

While Goebbels even now delayed announcing his decision, the infighting in Berlin increased. Schmiedicke had to reassure officials that Goebbels' salary would be paid by Munich, not Berlin. There were ugly scenes, with Hauenstein thumping Otto Strasser, and Strasser challenging somebody else to a duel. Finally Goebbels took the milestone decision to accept Berlin's offer. Back in Elberfeld on October 17 he broke the news to Lutze and Kaufmann, and noted in his diary, 'Off to Berlin at last on November 1. Berlin is the focal point,' he reasoned, 'for us too.'¹⁹ The formal appointment was dated October 26, and was announced in the *Völkischer Beobachter* two days later. On November 1 the N.S. *Letters* published his farewell to the Ruhr. 'And now,' he wrote, 'it's full steam ahead into the great asphalt jungle Berlin.'

HE who held Berlin held Germany. Hitler gave him authority to rule the gau with an iron fist. 'November 5,' recorded Goebbels. 'Hitler. Munich. Signs my terms.'²⁰

The Reich capital was like no other city in Europe—over-populated, throbbing with life twenty-four hours a day. It was an international hodgepodge of races, the collision point of western and eastern cultures. This sprawling heap of bricks and stone was divided into twenty boroughs of varying size and wealth, from Zehlendorf, with 470,000 inhabitants, to the proletarian slum Kreuzberg with 370,000. Politically the city was a red stronghold and Goebbels would find only a few hundred paid-up Nazis there; in the whole Reich there were still only forty-nine thousand. In the March 1925 presidential election 308,591 Berliners had voted for the communist (K.P.D.) candidate Ernst 'Teddy' Thälmann. In the municipal election that October, 52.2 percent had voted for the marxist parties, the K.P.D. increasing its vote to 347,382. Its front organizations like the Red League of Combat Veterans (Frontkämpferbund) and the Central Office of Red Aid (Zentralstelle der Roten Hilfe) were funded by the Soviet embassy and trade mission.

1927

Thus Goebbels had a highly visible opponent. Besides, he would be doing battle for the first time with the Jews. 'Berlin,' Muchow observed, 'is Red and Jewish in equal measure.'²¹ In 1816, there had been 3,400 Jews, but this figure had swollen to 36,500 by 1871, and to a hundred thousand at the turn of the century. By the time of Goebbels' arrival, one-third of Germany's half-million Jews were concentrated in the city.²² They made up 4.3 percent of its population: but they provided over half Berlin's lawyers, 15 percent of the real estate agents, and nearly 11 percent of the doctors; they dominated the wealthy ranks of Berlin dentists, pharmacists, judges, public prosecutors, and academics, and maintained a near stranglehold on the world of the arts. While *Mos Berliner Tageblatt* would become one of Goebbels' principal enemies, the newspaper had been founded in 1871 specifically for the protection of Jewish interests in Germany—he would arbitrarily lump all the bourgeois newspapers into the general category of 'Judenpresse.'

Scene?

When he said that the real power in Berlin was in Jewish hands that was a grain of truth in it. Dr Heinrich Brüning, chancellor of the Reich from 1930 to 1932, could find only one bank not so controlled. After ordering a government inquiry, he directed that its findings be kept secret for fear of provoking antisemitic riots.²³ A series of scandals surrounded Jewish swindlers like Kutisker, Sklarek, and the Barmat brothers parading through the courts.²⁴ Many of the public prosecutors in Berlin were Jewish. Goebbels would portray the Berlin police as largely Jewish controlled; in fact of the top officials only the powerful deputy chief (Vizepolizeipräsident) who directed section Ia, the three-hundred-man political police force, forerunner of the Gestapo, was a Jew.

1927

He was not just any Jew. Forty-six years old, the son of a millionaire grain merchant, Dr Bernhard Weiss had served like his three brothers with distinction in the war, won the Iron Cross, and become the first Jew ever to be accepted for the Prussian higher civil service.²⁵ His archival personnel file speaks of his highly developed sense of honour but also his over-developed ambition, conceit, and immodesty, and of a 'power-over-sensitivity tending to cloud his clarity of judgment.'²⁶ Appointed deputy police chief on March 17, 1927 in the redbrick police HQ at Alexander Platz, the diminutive (five-foot-four) Bernhard Weiss would become Goebbels' sworn enemy—not just because of the rigor with which he deployed his fourteen thousand truncheon-wielding uniformed police in the struggle for the streets of Berlin, but because he was a Jew and even his best friends said he looked like a caricature of one.²⁷

Dr Goebbels would shun no libel to blacken his name. Instinctively carrying on an ancient tradition of name-calling, he seized on Dr Weiss' nickname of 'Isidor' and commissioned a scurrilous Nazi marching song about him.²⁸ He would highlight every malfeasance of the criminal *dem monde* and identify it as Jewish. In these closing years of the Weimar republic, he was unfortunately not always wrong. In 1930 Jews would be convicted in forty-two of 210 known narcotics smuggling cases; in 1932 sixty-nine of the 272 known international narcotics dealers were Jewish.

see p 547

1927

Jews were arrested in over sixty percent of the cases concerning the running of illegal gambling dens; 193 of the 411 pickpockets arrested in 1932 were Jews. In 1932 no fewer than thirty-one thousand cases of fraud, mainly insurance swindles, would be committed by Jews.²⁹

Statistical comparisons are of course usually odious, but it was against this background that Goebbels now started his campaign. He would concentrate initially on the western boroughs of Charlottenburg, Wilmersdorf, Schöneberg, and Tiergarten, where over half Berlin's Jews had settled. They had originally populated the disheveled streets around the railroad termini of central and north-western Berlin where they had arrived from the east and from Galicia, but as they had prospered they had descended on the leafier western boroughs. Over 13 percent of Wilmersdorf's 196,000 inhabitants were Jews.³⁰

The sheer scale of the battle fought between Dr Goebbels and 'Isidor' Weiss can be judged from the court records. The police targeted the Nazi gauleiter with no fewer than forty court actions; Weiss himself was involved in twenty-three cases; Hitler came only eighth, with sixteen. Goebbels and Weiss would clash head on in four groups of trials, involving ten specific charges against Goebbels and a score more against his editors and journalists. In addition Weiss started nine other court actions, including three against Gregor Strasser, for calling him Isidor. Nearly all of these immensely complex cases were appealed all the way up the German legal system, but Weiss secured sixty convictions (including nineteen against Dr Goebbels). To non-Germans unfamiliar with the stiffness of Prussia, the pomposity of a civil servant like Weiss resorting to such legal sanctions seems breathtakingly pointless and even self-defeating. His first action, in May 1927, was against a Berlin news vendor who had displayed on his newsstand a *Völkischer Beobachter* featuring a competent and by no means hostile sketch of Dr Weiss; the unfortunate news vendor went to jail for a month.³¹ 'The mere application of the name Isidor, whereas the police vice-president's first name is in reality Bernhard, was a deliberate and purposeful insult,' argued Weiss's superior, Karl Zörgiebel, on June 1, demanding the prosecution of the *Völkischer Beobachter*'s editor too.³² In a telling *lapsus linguae* police chief Zörgiebel's indictment of Goebbels dated March 2, 1928 actually accused him of libeling 'the Polizeipräsident Dr. Weiss'—thus accidentally conceding what all Berlin already knew, that it was his deputy who called the shots, and not he.³³

Tirelessly and at taxpayers' expense Weiss fought the battles against Goebbels and his newspaper: the court dockets ooze with the cold fury aroused in him by irreverent cartoons (Weiss asking a policeman who demands the arrest of a communist thug: 'Ban them? Why—did he attack a Jew?'); by caricatures (a bespectacled, big-nosed donkey splay-legged on thin ice),³⁴ and even by a crossword puzzle.³⁵

IT was November 7, 1926 before Goebbels actually arrived in Berlin.³⁶ Dr. Otto Strasser met him at the station.

Goebbels' own legend, written up as *Battle for Berlin*, would have

him hurrying straight from the Anhalt station to a packed public meeting. The truth was more prosaic. The Berlin gau was penniless and in disarray. He made his first public speech at a memorial ceremony organized on the ninth, the anniversary of Hitler's failed Munich putsch, by the party's Women's Order (Frauenorden) in the Veterans' Building (Kriegervereinshaus) in Chaussée-Strasse. When Otto Strasser expressed irritation that Goebbels had arrived late, and had squandered money on a taxi, the new gauleiter replied: 'On the contrary. I would have arrived in two taxis if I could have. The people must see that our firm is up and running.' In his speech he expressed admiration for the men who had gunned down the Jewish politician Dr Walther Rathenau four years earlier. (For this remark he was later summoned to police HQ; but the resulting prosecution was subsequently abandoned.)³⁷

On the same day he issued the famous Circular No. 1 to all gau offices which began, 'As of today I am taking over the Berlin-Brandenburg gau as gauleiter.' Addressing the unappetizing conditions at the 'opium den' in Potsdamer Strasse, he decreed that gau HQ was neither a flop-house nor a waiting room; in future party members would need an appointment to speak with him. His circular displayed both realism and clever psychology. While appointing the troublesome and ambitious S.A. commander Kurt Daluge—who was twenty-nine—as his deputy, simultaneously downgraded the former Greater Berlin gau to the rank of *Ortsgruppe*, or local, and downgraded the present locals to sections. This made for a tighter ship and fewer illusions. Defining the role of the militant S.A. he wrote: 'S.A. and S.S. are the instruments whereby we shall attain power,' and he ruled that neither was to appear in public without his prior consent. He ended the circular with the promise: 'Adolf Hitler will visit the gau as soon as we have become a united force as one to be reckoned with.'³⁹

(925) The Strasser brothers were aghast at Goebbels' arrival in 'their' capital. But over the coming months he forced a level of activity that Berlin had not seen before; he founded a Nazi speakers' school, he developed a constant, intrusive, drum-beating propaganda campaign, and he provoked clashes with the communists that hit Berlin's newspaper headlines time and again. On Sunday November 14 he led a deliberately provocative propaganda march through the working-class suburb of Neukölln which aroused both fury and consternation among the local communists; the newspapers reported that in the ensuing disorders use was made of 'missiles, knuckle-dusters, clubs, and even pistols.'⁴⁰ Cutting out the dead wood, he threw out half of the gau's members. To secure its finances he founded an elitist Freedom League of three or four hundred Berliners pledged to contribute ten percent of their income in return for promises of later rewards. His first imperative was to finance new premises for the gau in the city center; his second to fund a marching band of four or fifty musicians with a full-time instructor; his third to purchase motor transport. At the end of December Goebbels moved into new offices.

No. 44 Lützow Strasse, four office rooms with all mod cons and two telephone lines.

His tactical object was to capture the communists' pawns, the unemployed hordes of Berlin. Typical of his S.A. footsoldiers was the young law student Horst Wessel, whose handwritten diary we now have. Aged just nineteen, he had joined the party that autumn. 'How I came to the National Socialists?' he asked. 'Out of disillusion really. My nationalist radicalism, or rather my radical nationalism had not found a home. But the Nazis, as they were already called, were radical—radical in every respect.' Wessel had been a member of the Bismarck and then Viking League since 1922, organizations which had just played soldiers. Goebbels' gau was, he soon found, different. The new gauleiter put the accent on *socialism*. 'The right-wing parties spurned us for our socialist slant,' wrote Wessel, 'and they weren't all that wrong, because National Socialists had more in common with the [communist] R.F.B. [Rote Frontkämpferbund] than with the [right-wing] Stahlhelm.'⁴²

During December Goebbels reorganized Berlin's S.A. into three regiments (*Standarten*). He tightened discipline, banning smoking and drinking on duty. On November 20 he met district leaders (*Kreisleiter*) and laid down guidelines for the future. Later that month he spoke in the Veterans' Building on 'Germany, Colony or State?' Scores of new members joined that same evening. Two weeks later eighteen hundred people crowded in to hear him speak on 'The Road to Power.' A breathless unanimity replaced the brawling and bickering of previous gau meetings.⁴³

Horst Wessel was one of those dedicated to the party. 'No sacrifice in time or money,' he would write, 'no danger of arrest or violence could scare me off. . . . The Sturmabteilungen, the S.A., were the stewards, the movement's fist against the police and the marxists. The structure itself was copied from the communists—sections instead of locals, the cell-system; our press advertising and propaganda clearly betrayed their [communist] inspiration. The vitality of this new movement was vast, best demonstrated by the defections to us from the marxist camp.' Goebbels created an atmosphere of constant activity. 'To Dr Göbbels [*sic*] alone,' wrote Wessel, 'goes the credit for having impinged the movement so rapidly on the Berlin public's consciousness. The man had extraordinary talents for oratory and organization. There was nothing he couldn't turn his hand to. The members were devoted to him. The S.A. would have let itself be torn to pieces for him. Göbbels was like Hitler himself. . . . He took care of the injured—he really was a first-class leader, a leader with class.'⁴⁴

At first the 'Judenpresse' ignored Goebbels. Denied the oxygen of publicity, he forced violent confrontations with the communists. After an initial bleeding in Spandau on January 25, when two hundred of them infiltrated a meeting intending to disrupt his speech, Goebbels' 'troops' fought three battles, at Cottbus, in Berlin's sleazy Pharus Rooms, and at suburban Lichterfelde.

⊙ from
p 48
usually,
the reward
is in heaven.
But Goebbels
saw the
offering.
Nazism
was a
religion
(Germany)
which ~~did~~
did not
need
the
opportunities
of God,
or such
real estate
as Heaven
and Hell.
Power now!
It was the
heaven for
the hours
the early
rag fares of
his boyhood
Catholicism
showed the
way. These
transports
now were the
game as they
had been
then.

~~So the S.A. was a religion of God.~~

1921 Goebbels had sent five truckloads of S.A. men to Cottbus to boost puny local contingent during a two-day Nazi 'freedom rally.' It was icy January night, and at dawn the men drove into Cottbus, where local S.A. provided billets. 'We wanted to show them,' wrote Muchow 'that the Berlin S.A. turned up everywhere we were needed.' The march through Cottbus began: 'Our Doctor [Goebbels] was with Daluge Kaiser-Wilhelm Platz, taking the salute.'⁴⁵ As Goebbels delivered impromptu speech there were already taunts of 'long live the commune Internationale!' A pitched battle broke out. The police and soldiers waded in with truncheons and rifle butts. The S.A. had two seriously injured, the police four. But the blood had been shed for naught: 'The entire Berlin "Judenpresse";' lamented Muchow, 'breathed not a word about our Cottbus demonstration.'

The Strassers' *Arbeiterzeitung* (masthead slogan: 'The workers' own newspaper in Berlin not beholden to loan-capital') published Goebbels' appeal for funds for 'our wounded S.A. comrades.' Seven hundred marks flowed in.

Goebbels owed a lot to the Strasser brothers.⁴⁶ Otto had also arranged for Hans Steiger, an editor on a bourgeois Berlin newspaper, to provide cheap lodgings in the rooming house run by Frau Steiger at No. 5, 1 Karlsbad. No doubt he wanted to keep an eye on Goebbels. Mrs Steiger provided a full-length mirror to enable him to practice public-speech postures; but her husband erred badly, trespassing on Goebbels' feelings by circulating a ballad that touched upon the gauleiter's private life as using a limping, lop-sided rhythm designed, Goebbels felt sure, to mock his disability.⁴⁷ The gauleiter, it turned out, could stand any amount of satire so long as it was not leveled at him.

The second great battle happened in the rundown Pharus Rooms, traditional communist meeting place behind No. 124 Müller Strasse, Berlin's working-class suburb of Wedding, on February 11. There were two hundred communists among Goebbels' thousand-strong audience. As he spoke on 'The collapse of the bourgeois class state' disturbance broke out and Daluge sent in the S.A. to evict the first troublemaker. The communists retreated, and the Nazis held the high ground, the gallery. In the few minutes before the police could intervene, the S.A. had roughed up eighty-three communists. When Goebbels resumed speaking, the platform was littered with bleeding men on stretchers. One man, Albert Tonak, aged twenty-one, was hospitalized with concussion.⁴⁹ In the VB report Goebbels described how he had learned that a surgeon called Levy was planning to delve into Tonak's skull; one hundred of his S.A. men, 'unemployed proletarians in brown shirts,' had stormed the hospital and rescued him. Goebbels added an appeal for funds to establish a party clinic of seven or eight rooms to treat their own emergency cases.⁵⁰ Tonak became the little Doctor's chauffeur, and landed on Hitler's eastern battlefields.

Goebbels had found the right formula. After this battle the pressure howled with rage—and more funds flowed in. He got the big car 1

covered. He claimed that anonymous benefactors had donated the four-seater Benz motor car to the gau, but 'Isidor' Weiss determined that the vehicle, license tag 26637-IA, had previously belonged to a merchant bank, Grundman & Co., that the two-thousand-marks *purchase* price had come from the Freedom League, and that it was registered in Goebbels' own name.⁵¹ By late February treasurer Franz Wilke could report that the gau now had eight to ten thousand marks in cash and assets.⁵² Lecturing the Freedom League, his cash cows, on 'My political awakening' on the fifteenth the gauleiter again claimed to have been plotting clandestinely with Hitler in Munich as early as 1919, and to have fought in the resistance against the French and Belgians occupying the Ruhr.⁵³

Just four days after the Pharus Rooms fight, Goebbels and his S.A. hooligans filled all fifteen hundred seats at a hall in Spandau. The left, still reeling, stayed away. Their newspapers uttered dire warnings to the workers to keep their eyes on this unexpected 'fascist menace.' The police watched with mounting fury as control of the streets passed into the hands of the political mobs.

A perverted sense of pride seized the Berlin S.A. Their young chronicler Reinhold Muchow doubted that their brother Brownshirts of Stuttgart, Weimar, or Hamburg could have survived such battles. Now, he observed, the Berlin Jews saw the writing on the wall. More printing ink would flow against the party during February 1927 than in all the preceding three months.

A high-water mark in this carnage came in March, just three days after 'Isidor's' appointment. Goebbels had ordered a nighttime function of the Berlin S.A. to be staged at Trebbin, a little town twenty miles away. About seven hundred S.A. men proudly wearing their uniform of jackboots, flat caps, breeches, and brown shirts made their way there: a bonfire blazed on the hillside, the flags and standards foregathered, and Goebbels played organ music to them before speaking. 'These sons of the Brandenburg countryside,' reported Muchow in purple prose, 'hung on every word of this man, their appointed leader in life and death. . . .'⁵⁴

The trouble began as the seven hundred Nazis piled into the train back to Berlin. Sitting near the front, they found twenty-three bandsmen of the Red Front's Seventh District (Brandenburg) and a communist member of the provincial parliament, Paul Hoffmann. By the time the train pulled into East Lichterfelde station every window had been shattered. As the Nazis jumped out a shot rang out and one S.A. leader was hit in the stomach. Another S.A. man was grazed on the head by a bullet. The police stormed the platform and arrested several Nazis. They found the communist bandsmen cowering on the floor surrounded by shattered glass, splintered wood, and rocks; eighteen of them were injured, twelve seriously. Hoffmann was barely recognizable, his face smeared with blood. A thousand more Nazis had meanwhile arrived outside the station to join the S.A. for a march through Berlin's bourgeois western suburbs. The gunfire caused uproar. Goebbels, Daluege, and gau manager Dago- bert Dürr arrived in their limousine, to storms of applause. 'Where the

196

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road curved,' wrote one S.A. man, 'there stood our Doctor in his car. Standing with arm raised he saluted us and looked into our faces. Goebbels would claim at the resulting court hearings to have called discipline and calm as his injured comrades were carried out of station.⁵⁵ The owner of a neighboring soap-store testified however after an injured thirty-five-year old communist had been carried in taxi two Nazis had torn its door open: one, a thin young man, pulled pistol out of his pants pocket, and shouted, 'I'm going to shoot the dead!' The other, a little man with a right club foot that turned inward had dissuaded him.⁵⁶ 'The National Socialists,' reported the police, 'charged into the communists with a fusillade of revolver shots: wielding steel flagpoles like lances, leaving nine slightly and five seriously injured on the battlefield.'⁵⁷ (Goebbels' version in the *Völkischer Beobachter* differed. 'The first shot fired by the Red assassins,' he claimed, 'hit one of the two police constables in the forearm. He appealed to our S.A. for help, shouting: "Guys, help us, we can't handle it on our own!"')⁵⁸

They marched past Steglitz city hall and on through west Berlin. Wherever Jews were spotted they were set upon and bludgeoned to the ground.⁵⁹ At Wittenberg Platz, where eight thousand people had gathered, Goebbels made a speech. 'The Reds have spilled our blood,' he shrieked. 'We're not going to allow ourselves to be treated as second-class citizens any more.' He ended with a transparent hint: 'Now do all go chasing off massacring those Jews down Kurfürstendamm. Deutschland—awake!' came the response—the battle-cry of the S.A.

Those were his methods. Horst Wessel, soon to become commander of No. 5 Sturm based on the communist-infested Alexander Platz area, was in the thick of it all. 'Gunfight on East Lichterfelde station, then injured but victory. Victory everywhere the S.A. goes into action.' 'It accomplished what no other movement had in Germany,' he wrote with heavy irony in 1929, 'namely to unite the entire people: Because that was all united against us—incredibly united.'⁶¹

Goebbels now had two more men in the hospital. Eight had been arrested, several would draw prison sentences. 'Isidor' Weiss ordered the Nazis' Charlottenburg and Moabit section HQs ransacked for weapons and for several days the Red Front exacted revenge on any Nazis caught alone in the streets. They had captured the party ID of one Nazi and splashed its photograph on placards all over Berlin two days later: WANTED—DEAD OR ALIVE.⁶² Goebbels however judged only by results: four hundred more Berliners joined the party, bringing its membership to three thousand.

The Strasser brothers despaired, preferring reason and logic to brute force. The 'Judenpresse' seized upon the differences between them as articles appeared in the communist *Welt am Abend*, the *Berliner Tageblatt* and the equally Jewish *Vossische Zeitung* gloating over a 'feud in the household of Hitler.'⁶³

STILL perfecting his techniques, Goebbels stood in front of the foldir

1927

triptych mirror in Mrs Steiger's drawing room practicing each pose and gesture.⁶⁴ His oratory drew audiences of thousands. He rode their mood, leading them on a tide of invective to a hysterical, cheering, table-rattling finale. He had instinctively developed the art of ceremonial too, to bring audiences to fever pitch—the flags, the bands, the deliberately delayed arrival. He spoke at locations from Weinheim in the south to Hamburg in the north.⁶⁵ Writing in the *Letters* on April 1 he prescribed how to deal with hecklers. 'You don't seem to realize that you're at a National Socialist meeting,' the speaker was to shout at the unfortunate interrupter. 'I'll not be able to guarantee that you won't be made into a useful member of the human race by a suitable head massage.'

|| self-criticism

When I speak in Essen or in Düsseldorf or in Elberfeld [Goebbels had written once] it's like a holiday for me. . . . We don't have to search for the enemy, he's in our midst, lurking in the audience ready to pounce. When I come into the hall a thousand voices shout Down With Him, there's a hooting and a screeching. Then the struggle begins—two, three hours, sometimes longer. . . . And the miracle happens. What was a wild, howling mob turns into human beings of flesh and blood who think and feel just as we do, only more tormented, more trampled on, with an immense hunger for light and succor. . . . And gradually the people are re-created before my very eyes. I see just fists and eyes, and there is a holy fire in those eyes.⁶⁶

* Holy Fire
a personal little

The Ruhr gau held its annual rally on Sunday April 25. Here too the party's ranks were swelling. 'Essen is dominated by the swastika & our flag!' Rudolf Hess boasted to his fiancée Ilse.⁶⁷ Goebbels mailed a picture postcard of the huge assembly to Anka Stalherm. While he and Hitler addressed the fourteen thousand invited party members however Goebbels was seething with rage: people had drawn his attention to a scurrilous article published anonymously in the Strassers' newspapers on April 23, entitled 'Results of Race Mixing.' (Its anonymous author was Erich Koch.)

'It is well known [this venomous piece began] that miscegenation results in mental disequilibria. . . . Physical equilibrium is disturbed, either by disease or by the stunted growth of individual limbs or by other physical defects.'

Goebbels took this as a wounding reference to his physical disability. The writer adduced various unflattering examples from history, like the murderous Richard III, who was also 'a dwarf who limped!', and Talleyrand, who 'possessed a club foot. . . . The word "character" could not be applied to him'.⁶⁸

Strasser fled
3 June
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Goebbels complained to Hitler that same afternoon. Hitler agreed that coupled with the Kampf Verlag's other recent irruptions against Goebbels this article was clearly actionable; he warned against litigating, but promised to tackle the Strassers himself. Erich Koch wrote to Goebbels admitting (or claiming) authorship, but could not resist rubbing salt in



the wounds by stating that his article was no more than an exposition of 'the racial theories our party stands for.'⁶⁹

THE article brought the Goebbels-Strasser feud to boiling point. Strassers had by now learned that he was raising finance to launch a Nazi tabloid in Berlin called *Angriff* (Attack).⁷⁰ Although the Strassers had earlier provided his gau with every facility in their *Arbeiterzeitung* and the *N.S. Letters*, of which he was still editor, Goebbels had determined to smash their monopoly. The *Arbeiterzeitung* was still the official organ of the Berlin gau and by September 1926 it was already printing a national weekly, the *Nationalsozialist*, for northern Germany (which also printed the libelous article). Expanding in 1927, the Strassers persuaded the tall, flabby twenty-six-year-old Hans Hinkel, editor of a local southern newspaper, to invest heavily in their concern; the brothers George, Otto, and Franz Strasser still controlled 51 percent. The firm was thus comparable with the party's Franz Eher Verlag in the south. But the Strasser publications were less heathen and antisemitic than Hitler-Rosenberg newspapers like the *Völkischer Beobachter*.

Goebbels undoubtedly nursed an unhealthy complex about the wealthy Strasser family, although his diaries show that he privately respected Gregor more than his later public remarks would allow. Gregor was a member of the Reichstag, which provided him with free first-class travel and immunity from arrest. But Goebbels could call upon the talents of his gifted caricaturist Hans Schweitzer ('Mjölnir'), and through him spread the corrosive rumor that Otto had Jewish blood. Gregor repudiated that both he and Otto had at least served in the Great War and in the Free Corps after that, 'unlike Dr Goebbels or Mr Schweitzer,' and the matter, for the time being, rested.

MAY 1927 brought first triumph, then disaster. On May Day Hitler himself spoke in Berlin for the first time—before a private audience because the Prussian minister of the interior Albert Grzesinski had banned him from speaking in public. The five thousand listeners packed into the Clou, a well-known dance hall in Mauer Strasse, still made an impressive audience. Unaware that the police were now just waiting for a pretext to clamp down on him, Goebbels arranged a further meeting at the Veterans' Building for May 4, where he delivered a poisonous ninety-minute tirade against the press, infuriated by its spiteful coverage of Hitler's speech at the Clou.⁷² Singling out one journalist, he told his two thousand listeners to note down the home address of Otto Kriegk of the *Lokal-Anzeiger* (who was present)—a typically Nazi trick—and suggested they find out where others lived and administer a 'National Socialist head massage' to them too.⁷³ The olive-complexioned Goebbels had just recommended his audience to display their 'forceful gratitude' to a journalist on *Germania* who boasted the suspicious Germanic name of Karl-Otto Graetz but was really, he said, a 'swine or a Jew' (*Judensau*)⁷⁴ when Fritz Stucke, an elderly but politically active

192

parson, exclaimed sarcastically, 'A fine image of Germanic youth you look!⁷⁵ 'I take it,' shouted Goebbels, breaking the pained silence that followed and pointing to the doors, 'that you're keen to get flung out on your ear?'⁷⁶ When Stucke taunted Goebbels again, burly young men bundled him downstairs, dragging him the last few yards by his feet.

This time Goebbels had gone too far. By the time his guest, leader of Sweden's Nazis, had also spoken, hundreds of police were cordoning the building. A police major closed the meeting down. He ordered the audience to file out singly and be searched for weapons. The police haul was a veritable arsenal of blackjacks, knuckle-dusters, knives, and revolvers;⁷⁷ eighteen Nazis were arrested for resisting the search. The press smelt blood and tasted revenge. Their lurid reports had S.A. thugs battering the parson with beer mugs and kicking him; doctors, they said, marveled that his skull was not fractured.⁷⁸

Twenty-four hours later Dr Bernhard Weiss served a restraining order on Dr Goebbels, banning him from speaking in Berlin, and dissolving his gau.⁷⁹ They also charged him with incitement to violence.⁸⁰ After just six months in Berlin the unstoppable gauleiter seemed to have run into an immovable object: the police vice-president of Berlin.

1927

7 : Fighting the Ugly Dragon

THE ban would stay in force for eleven months. It was the work of the Social Democratic politician Albert Grzesinski, the minister of the interior in Prussia. The illegitimate son of a servant, Grzesinski was a year older than Dr Weiss and a former metal worker and trade union leader.¹ He had previously been Berlin's police chief himself. The communist *Red Flag* accused him of hating the revolutionary working class; the conservative right wing feared that he would use his power to consolidate the Social Democratic position; the Nazis would fight him tooth and claw. Goebbels would claim that Grzesinski's natural father was not the butcher's boy named in the files but one Ernst Cohn, a Jewish merchant in whose service his mother had been employed. In any matter that Cohn was only seventeen at the time in question, the legend persisted—resulting in one of the many libel actions that Goebbels would soon face.

The banning document signed by police chief Karl Zörgiebel on May 5, 1927 alleged a catalogue of misdemeanors—assaults, criminal damage and firearms offenses—perpetrated by the gau since mid-October. 'The "Ten Commandments" issued by Goebbels [to the S.A.],' the document read, 'the ninth reads: "Resistance to police and state authority today is always stupid, because you will always come off worse. . . . The state will take revenge on you and on us with prison sentences and steep fines. So, if there is no other way, comply with the state authority, but console yourself: we shall square accounts later!"' The ban also quoted from Goebbels' pamphlet *Ways to the Third Reich*:

'Domination of the street is the first step to state power. He who purveys his Weltanschauung with terror and brute force will one day possess the power, and thus the right, to overthrow the state.' 'As such aims of association are incompatible with the criminal law,' Zörgiebel concluded, 'disbandment is justified.'²

Goebbels was mortified. He refused to sign a form acknowledging receipt of the ban, stating that it was written in unintelligible German. Writing to Grzesinski, he pointed out that his gau embraced the whole province of Brandenburg, not just Berlin: 'The ban is therefore null and void,' he argued. He also claimed that Berlin's 'gutter press' (*Asphaltpress*, another invented Goebbels word) had deliberately distorted the Past

May 7, 1932

FIGHTING THE UGLY DRAGON 57

Stucke business. He made no apologies for having publicly identified the journalists who dared to jibe at Hitler, 'a German front-line soldier.' As for Stucke, he said, the clergyman had called out 'du Hund!' (you dog), whereupon members of his audience had 'slowly ushered him out.' He blamed the weapons arsenal on *agents provocateurs* and added that his gau had appealed in writing to Dr Weiss for police protection after individual members had been attacked by 'Red mobs.' 'Your police president,' he lectured Grzesinski, 'is being praised by the entire press of the international money-capital. This proves that it is not the German people, only a clique of international moneybags, who had an interest in seeing the German freedom movement banned.' If Grzesinski still refused to lift the ban, history would prove him wrong since he did not possess the power to kill an idea.

Still smoldering, Goebbels spoke to a provincial Nazi rally in Stuttgart with Hitler on May 7, seizing the opportunity to accuse Weiss, Zörgiebel, and Grzesinski of stage-managing the incident with Pastor Stucke, a parson unfrocked for morals offenses.⁴ On his arrival back in Berlin his fans rioted at the Anhalt station, and he was taken off for questioning.⁵ He hired a lawyer and appealed, using the gau's headed notepaper; Zörgiebel silkily advised him to refrain from using the banned Nazi notepaper or rubber stamp again.⁶ A great silence now overcame the party organization in Berlin.

One fact buoyed Goebbels at this dark hour, the knowledge that he would soon found a weekly newspaper of his own in Berlin, *Angriff*. He announced his plan at a secret meeting in his apartment. But raising the finance was not easy.⁷ Gregor Strasser was furious at the plan, and tackled Hitler at his favorite Munich restaurant about rumors that he had agreed to write a regular leading article; Hitler assured him the rumors were not true.⁸

Goebbels had no time for the Strassers since their newspapers had lampooned him and his club foot. A homeopath, Dr Steintel, had told him in a Berlin pub how the Strasser brothers, especially Otto, had plotted to ruin the gauleiter by highlighting his 'racial defect.' There was enough circumstantial detail to make it seem plausible. When Steintel asked the truth about the club foot, Goebbels declared that he had had an accident as a teenager, which ruled out the racially 'otherwise permissible' inference. Armed with this new information Goebbels dictated a furious letter to Hitler: Neither Jews nor marxists had, he said, stooped so low to get at him. 'He has to be destroyed,' the Strassers seemed to have said, 'because he is inconvenient for Kampf Verlag, a private enterprise.' Hinting at resignation, he warned Hitler that he would never succeed without 'eradicating' personalities like these.⁹ When Hitler, in a quandary, did not reply, Goebbels nagged Hess, Hitler's secretary, to issue a statement backing him.¹⁰ At a private meeting of the Berlin gau's officers on June 10 attended by Steintel he asked for a vote of confidence. He pointed out that Erich Koch, a humble railroad official, could not possibly have authored such a venomously clever article; the

July
10, 1927

58 II: THE GAULEITER OF BERLIN

club foot, he again insisted, was not congenital but the consequence of teenage mishap.¹¹

The split widened, as Goebbels stepped up the pressure on his rival. When Gregor Strasser spoke in Berlin he had a member of the audience ask about his lucrative pharmaceutical practice and fat Reichstag pay check.¹² By mid-June the bickering was so bad that Emil Holtz, the legal arbitrator, appealed to Hitler to settle it in person. Holtz sided with the Strassers, while conceding that Goebbels had succeeded in spurring the Berliners on. 'He has made the movement famous,' he told Hitler. 'But he lacks inner stability and attention to detail.'¹³ Since Goebbels was calling on his members to buy only *Angriff*—it was now due to appear on July 4—Holtz feared irreparable damage to Strasser's publication (which was just what Goebbels desired). Nobody, Holtz pointed out, could tell how long *Angriff* would survive.

Goebbels hurried off to see Hitler in Munich. He wanted both Strasser evicted from the Nazi party. The party's chief arbitrator ruled that Hitler would settle the whole matter at some major Berlin function later on.¹⁴ While still in Munich on the evening of June 20, Goebbels addressed 450 people on his first six months as Berlin's gauleiter—and the ban.

He claimed to have added six hundred new members during April. 'Let the gentlemen in Berlin,' he added, 'take note that the time will come when the National Socialists will pay them back in the same coin and with interest. Nothing will be forgotten.'¹⁵

The fight against 'Isidor' Weiss went on. 'He who has the police in Berlin has Prussia,' Goebbels would pronounce. 'He who has Prussia has the Reich.'¹⁶ Justifying his rowdy methods in a speech on July 10 in Potsdam, just outside Weiss's fief, he said, 'A movement which means smash the old State cannot march in bedroom slippers. We may not have won the affections of this city of four million, but we have earned hatred, and hatred can turn to affection.'¹⁷

Even more seditious in police eyes was Goebbels' now widely disseminated fifteen-page brochure *The Nazi* which clearly spoke of plans to overthrow the state.¹⁸ 'History,' he had written, 'has seen repeated how a young, determined minority has overthrown the rule of a corrupt and rotten majority, and then used for a time the state and its means of power in order to bring about by dictatorship . . . and force the conditions necessary to complete the conquest and to impose new ideas.' So too wrote Goebbels, it would be with the Nazi party. 'And then we, the responsible minority, will enforce our will upon a flabby, lazy, stupid and stupid majority lurking behind which the Jew prosecutes his dark plans.' All of this was noted in Dr Weiss's police files, and more. 'If the German people does not want to be liberated,' Goebbels had written, 'then we shall act without their consent.'

Then [continued Goebbels] we march against this State, we take the one last great risk for Germany; from revolutionaries by word we become revolutionaries by deed.

↑

his deepest motive

Then we stage a revolution! ... The will to power will procure the means to power. The others may have the weapons but we have what they do not: the willingness to use force, and this willingness will procure the weapons that we need.¹⁹

Speaking in Düsseldorf that summer he reiterated: 'Without weapons we'll get nowhere.'²⁰

FOR the moment Goebbels' only weapon was the printed word. During the last days of June 1927 he rained a carefully timed series of blood-red posters on Berlin. The first read simply, 'Attack!' The second, 'Attack is coming.' The third, 'The attack will come on July 4.'

To edit *Angriff* he had picked Dr Julius Lippert; Lippert was imprisoned shortly before the first issue, and Dagobert Dürr, a former meteorologist, stood in for him. But the first edition squibbed. The badly designed, anemic sheet sold only twelve hundred copies, the next only nine hundred. With the newspaper losing money and morale, several of his staff walked out.

Goebbels was no quitter. His street salesmen adopted ruthless tactics. *Angriff's* circulation staggered upward to around two thousand. Its style was soapbox oratory in print. With a Jesuit's sure instinct for the niceties of the law he defamed without libeling; his pen dipped, thrust, parried, then dipped again. It was more anti-capitalist than Hitler approved of, but the Berlin working classes lapped up the subtle antisemitism of Mjölnir's caricatures. Goebbels contributed a venomous diary column and a weekly leading article ripe with lush verbal raspberries about 'the reader-rabble of the gutter press.' The newspaper would develop a sarcastic, irreverent, scurrilous, mocking style of its own, not unlike the satirical newssheets of later decades: written partly in a well-captured Berlin dialect, its humor was a mixture of sophomoric poetry, puns, innuendoes, and insider-jokes for the entertainment of a very few. The chief butt of its humor was of course the unfortunate Dr Bernhard Weiss, the self-important, horseback-riding, bespectacled Jewish ex-cavalry officer. Each week *Angriff* carried a regular column mocking the police force, entitled 'Watch that truncheon!' The paper's pages were strewn with puns on the name Weiss, with both blatant and surreptitious anti-semitism, with unflattering comments on the deputy chief's riding and driving skills and on the shape of his nose, and with assertions that of course his real name was Bernhard—was it not illegal now to suggest anything else?²¹ Soon it was enough for Goebbels to paint a word picture of Him, motoring in a princely limousine down Kurfürstendamm, for every reader to know who was meant.²²

He seized upon his opponents' more cherished slogans. If enemies called him a Bandit, his next posters announced him as the Arch Bandit of Berlin. A politician of the Weimar republic had spoken of providing Germans with a 'life of beauty and dignity.' Goebbels rode that phrase into the ground over the next six years. He began an article on the

192,
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enough the
best of him
household in Berlin

* To attack him in Berlin was

1927 - 28

60 II: THE GAULEITER OF BERLIN

mounting suicide rate with the ironic comment, 'The following w
unable to endure any longer the happiness of this Life of Beauty :
Dignity.' He recognized that the target must always be an identifica
individual, like 'Isidor,' rather than an idea or group. Humorless, de
cated, and self-important, Dr Weiss made the perfect butt.²³ Goebb
used that 'Isidor' with such a thudding regularity that all Berlin came
assume it was Weiss's real name, as did some of his own officers, wh
he then also prosecuted. Weiss had enjoyed a high profile until Goebb
debut in Berlin: the papers carried many pictures of this diminutive, s
important official at public functions sporting a silk hat, tailcoat, &
striped pants. Mounting a campaign brilliantly designed to undermin
his authority, Goebbels published no fewer than six leader articles ab
him.²⁴ In every issue of *Angriff* until No. 44 there was an attack on We
its cartoons depicted him as a flatfooted Jew with bow legs, thick
lensed pince-nez, mustache, and jug ears. Undaunted by the laws of libe
Goebbels accused Weiss in effect of being a Jew and trying to conceal
When Weiss sued, again and again, the courts decided that 'Isidor' al
was not libelous.

The supreme court in Leipzig found with Goebbels that to call a Jew
a Jew was no more defamatory than to call a catholic a catholic.

The
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AT the end of the third week in August 1927 the Nazis staged their th
national rally, this time in Nuremberg. One hundred thousand peop
poured into the city: with unemployment rising, curiosity about Hitle
party was increasing. Berlin's forbidden S.A. turned out in force, eag
to wear their uniforms; fifty of them had marched all the way to N
emberg and Goebbels sent hundreds more in chartered trains. On th
return 'Isidor' Weiss ordered the trains stopped at Teltow and his poli
arrested 435 Nazis.²⁵ They were detained in police cells all day, a
seventy lost their jobs in consequence: Goebbels did not care, beca
martyrs were more useful to his gau. As Schweitzer's banners for t
Nuremberg rally had said, 'Ours is the future.' In northern Germany,
Hamburg and Brunswick, the National Socialists were now winni
electoral seats. By the end of the year the party would have 72,500
registered members.

Of these however only some four thousand were in Berlin. Still banned
the gau was not finding the struggle easy.

On October 29, 1927 Goebbels was thirty. At a small party his offi
staff handed him an envelope containing torn-up notes for the loans us
to launch *Angriff* and two thousand marks in cash, and gave him t
news that they had collected 2,500 new subscriptions to the weekly.
was about to break even. In February 1928 it would be selling 31,000
copies each week.²⁶ Powered by his articles, the newspaper would appe
twice weekly from September 30, 1929 and daily from November
1930, increasing its daily circulation from an average 68,600 in 1931
a peak of 119,000 just after the seizure of power in 1933.²⁷

ON his birthday the Berlin political police lifted the speaking ban on Goebbels; but he was still on probation. The posters announced that he was to speak on Tuesday November 8 in the working-class suburb of Neukölln on 'The German people's dance of death.' Even without the swastika, Goebbels' hand was unmistakable. Addressed to 'Men of the fist and brow, proletarians of the factory bench and study cubicle,' the posters heaped ironic praise on the grandiose achievements of the Social Democrats since 1918. 'Peace, freedom, work, and bread! All of these Social Democracy has given to the German working man, plus'—in large letters—'A LIFE OF BEAUTY AND DIGNITY.' Tickets were fifty pfennigs (only ten pfennigs for the unemployed). Thus the battlewagon was rolling again, and on November 6 he had the pleasure of seeing his semi-religious play *The Wanderer* premiered in a matinee by the 'National Socialist Experimental Theatre Company' too.

AT the end of 1927 Dr Joseph Goebbels, agitator, streetfighter, and journalist, received a letter from Cologne, as though from another world: the Catholic charity there was still trying to recover its student loan to him.²⁸ It had reduced its claim to four hundred marks. Goebbels tossed the letter away.

Permitted to speak but with his party still banned in Berlin, he was careful to flatter Hitler to people with close ties to Munich.²⁹ He particularly befriended Rudolf Hess. Hitler's private secretary, favored Hess's fiancée Ilse with flowers and wrote to her praising the Führer in the sure knowledge that his words would be passed on. 'I was with the chief in Nuremberg on Sunday and Monday [the 14th and 15th],' he wrote to Ilse on November 16. 'What a guy he is! I could almost envy you for being around him the whole time. We can all be downright proud of him. Now,' he continued, 'I have barricaded myself back into this omnibus-ridden asphalt desert. . . . Meanwhile we're back in combat with this magnificent ugly dragon, Berlin. We're at each other's throats again and that's why things are looking up again. Thank God, they've started cursing at us again.'³⁰

These Goebbels methods worked.

THE propaganda [he explained in a speech] which produces the desired results is good, and all other propaganda is bad. . . . Therefore it is meaningless to say your propaganda is too crude, too cruel, too brutal, or too unfair, for none of those terms matter. . . . Propaganda is always a means to an end. It is an art which can be taught to the average person like playing the violin. But there comes a point when you say, 'You're on your own now. What remains to be learned can only be accomplished by a genius.' If people say, 'But you are only propagandists,' then you should answer, 'And what else was Jesus Christ? Did he not make propaganda? . . . Is Mussolini a scribbler or is he a great speaker? When Lenin went from Zürich to Saint Petersburg did he rush from the station into his study to write a book or did he speak before a multitude?'

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1928

62 II: THE GAULEITER OF BERLIN

BY early 1928 Hitler confided in him intimately. In January he told Goebbels he was planning shortly to meet 'Benito'.³¹ (Evidently not came of it.) In February he promised Goebbels that if the Nazis secured enough seats in the forthcoming Prussian election, Goebbels would be their bloc leader; and that he would also be a Reichstag candidate Gregor Strasser.³² A month later Hitler dangled the latter promise at him anew. 'The Chief,' Goebbels recorded smugly, 'used very big language about Dr [Otto] Strasser.' Strasser had founded a newspaper in Essen competing with the local gauleiter's. 'Now they all see how right I was in my fight against this loathsome swine,' wrote Goebbels; he would take pleasure in helping the gauleiter, Joseph Terboven, to smash Strasser brother. 'That's what you get for heaping filth on me month after month,' he remarked in his unpublished diary. 'Revenge is a best savored cold' (it was to become one of his favorite aphorisms).³³

His speeches were now one of Berlin's top attractions. '[Goebbels] spoke on March 23 in the Swiss Gardens at Friedrichshain,' the police solemnly reported, opening yet another dossier. 'Poked fun at Polizeivizepräsident Weiss.³⁴ Weiss had twenty-one thousand official fourteen thousand uniformed police, three thousand detectives, four thousand full-blown civil servants; there were forty-seven thousand photos and half a million fingerprints in his Rogues' Gallery; his museum even had the original uniform of the Captain of Köpenick.³⁵ Yet he could not keep down this poisonous dwarf limping at the head of his Nazis in Berlin. Indeed, in March Goebbels sent off to the printers his 168-page lampoon of Weiss, The Book of Isidor, sub-titled 'A Portrait of Our Time Packed with Laughter and Hate'.³⁶

The entertaining public face-off between the pompous police chief and the propagandist continued throughout the year. One beerhall brawl on February 23 ended with Goebbels' driver Tonak again injured on the occasion, stabbed three times in the back dangerously close to the heart.

Those were hectic weeks.³⁸ The next morning Goebbels was arrested at six A.M. That evening he was heading for Cottbus with his S.A. 'lance'. On March 12 he wrote to the courts asking to be excused from testifying in the trial of Nazis involved in the gun battle at Lichtenfelde station. But the political police would not brook any delays, and he had to testify. 'He is in fact the leading personality,' they pointed out, 'in the fight against the police headquarters.'⁴¹ Six of his men involved in the gun battle were sentenced to a total of three years and seven months in prison. On March 24 he was back in court. 'Today I have six hearings,' he recorded. Four were for slandering 'Isidor,' one for high treason, and one for causing bodily harm.⁴² The courts fixed April 28 for the case against Goebbels and Dürr for libeling Dr Weiss in Angriff. Goebbels did his damndest to wriggle off the hook, filing several applications for postponements.⁴³ Weiss's deputy Wündisch, head of the Berlin political police, demanded that Goebbels be arrested if he failed to show up, they fully expected him to keep spinning things out until he won immunity in the forthcoming election.⁴⁴ Midday on the twenty-eighth found t

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gauleiter duly in court with his editor Dürr. 'Before German judges,' he seethed in his diary. 'A ridiculous farce. Prosecutor demanded two months for Dürr and myself.' The sentence was three weeks. 'I just kept silent,' he added. 'Once I'm immune I will accept full blame to spare Dürr.'⁴⁵ The judgment concluded that the newspaper had published wicked and deliberate libels on the worthy Dr Weiss: 'By calling him "Isidor" and publishing the comment, "How dare you kick me with your flat little feet" they were underlining Dr Weiss's Jewish origins.' Revenge in this case was both sweet and cold: in May he received the printers' proofs of *Isidor*.⁴⁶ As for the cartoon of the donkey with all four legs splayed on the ice, Goebbels allowed *Angriff* to publish it again with this solemn caption: 'In convicting our editor Dürr the judge stipulated *inter alia*, "This donkey does bear the face of Vice Police President Dr Weiss."⁴⁷

How he hated that man, and how the Nazis and communists alike laughed when truncheon-wielding police officers accidentally thrashed Weiss as well.⁴⁸ The Brownshirts added a new verse to their marching song on 'Isidor' and Goebbels composed an unsympathetic leader for *Angriff* about 'the story of a Jew who didn't want to look like one,' who 'forbade people to call him Isidor because his name was Bernhard—"Bear's Heart,"' and who in broad daylight was 'thrashed by his own police officers with their rubber truncheons because they couldn't believe they could possibly have a chief who looked like that.' The result was yet another prosecution for libeling the humorless Dr Weiss.⁴⁹

THE Reichstag dissolved in March 1928. On the last day of the month Dr Weiss lifted the ban on the Nazis, because the elections would be held in May. Goebbels formally relaunched the party in Berlin at a ceremony on April 13, then sent long columns of Brownshirts to march defiantly through the streets again.⁵⁰ 'We marched,' wrote one of his S.A. men, 'and we marched. We marched although people bombarded us with every conceivable projectile and missile.'⁵¹

The five weeks of electioneering were crippled by lack of funds.⁵² Goebbels sat in street cafés with his artist Schweitzer, suggesting poster themes.⁵³ In the evenings he patrolled the section headquarters at Alexander Platz, Tempelhof, Friedenau, and elsewhere. Experimenting with propaganda techniques, he dictated one speech onto phonograph discs.⁵⁴ He spent his spare time tinkering with *Michael*, inserting new vitriolic lines attacking the Jews, and *Blood Seed*.⁵⁵ May Day found him in a grubby Polish international train heading for Düsseldorf; sitting in the audience there he glimpsed his mother, brothers, and little sister Maria; he only rarely saw them nowadays. On May 17 he hobbled at the head of 250 S.A. men marching through Spandau and Tegel and into working-class Wedding, heedless of the screeches and whistles of their baffled enemies—'chinstraps tightened,' he recorded proudly afterwards, 'With these lads we'll conquer the world.'⁵⁶

In the final weeks before the election he detected signs of unrest among

1928

these 'lads.' Munich had appointed Walther Stennes, a former p captain aged thirty-three, to command the S.A. in this part of Germ 'a regular chap!' Goebbels had written in February, and 'a sple fellow' in April.⁵⁷ But he was soon keeping Stennes at a distance. He independently wealthy, and had only joined the Party in December v Goebbels insisted. Stennes had found in the Berlin S.A. an undiscipl rabble which goaded the police to no real purpose.⁵⁸ He had introd Prussian discipline, and now he began asking for a larger slice of cake—more Reichstag candidates should be from the S.A. To Goeb it was the old story, of 'soldiers' meddling in politics. 'The military sh sharpen the sword,' he decided, 'and leave it to us politicians to de when it has to be used.'⁵⁹

That he was now fighting with the ballot box rather than by revolu seemed a total betrayal of his own teachings. It was expediency. Besi he intended to raid the Reichstag as the 'arsenal of democracy' and s its weapons. 'If,' he wrote, 'we succeed in planting in the Reichstag s or seventy of our own agitators and organizers, then the state itself equip and pay for our fighting machine.'

IT was streaming with rain as Germany went to the polls on May. Nationwide, the Nazi party had finished tenth in 1924; it now did rat better, though its share of the vote in Berlin was still unimpres: (only 1.5 percent). Over eight hundred thousand voted for the Hi movement, but only thirty-nine thousand Berliners. The party increa its representation in the Reichstag from seven to twelve. Goebbels he the results at a jam-packed election bash at the Victoria Gardens. T. shouldered him around the hall with whoops of triumph. He would now be a Reichstag deputy: The other eleven lucky Nazis would include Gregor Strasser, Wilhelm Frick, and Hermann Göring.⁶⁰

As the specter of prison faded, he wrote cynically in Angriff: 'I am I.d.I. and an I.d.F.: Inhaber der Immunität and Inhaber der Frei-Reiserecht ifahrkarte,' possessed of immunity and a free travel pass. 'The I.d.I.,' continued, 'can call a dungheap a dungheap. He doesn't have to mi his language by calling it a state.' And he added: 'This is but a prelud You're going to have a lot of fun with us. It's showtime!'

June 19, 1928

8: Anka is to Blame

THERE WERE disadvantages in having such a high profile. On June 19, 1928 the catholic charity again wrote to Goebbels from Cologne, suggesting now that he pay off his ten-year-old debt at fifty marks per month. Their letter was returned endorsed 'delivery refused.'

He had resumed the feud with Dr Weiss at once. 'DO YOU BELIEVE THAT ISIDOR IS BEHAVING HIMSELF?' his newspaper headlined. 'Yes, indeed: *Isidor*,' Goebbels repeated. 'I'll defy the ban. Under the cowardly protection of immunity I'll name names. *Isidor*! The *o* must be long drawn out, and the *r* rolled until this name reverberates with inexpressible sweetness and power. The Gift of the East!'¹

Try as he could, Dr Weiss could not nail him. His prey always dodged in time. More items were clipped into the police dossier: Munich police were charging Goebbels with illegal fund raising; Berlin police heard him announce on May 13, 'The present state is a dunghill and the police president a Jew;' an action was pending for 'incitement to class war;' and there were countless breaches of press regulations.² The court hearing of the Pastor Stucke case in June lasted all day. Goebbels spoke for two hours; the six-week sentence was reduced to a fine of six hundred marks. 'A Jew, Löwenstein, sat on the judge's bench,' he observed, 'otherwise we should probably have got off scot free.... Not a penny shall I pay anyway.'³ He continued to run rings round the courts; his supporters packing the public galleries hooted and jeered as he and his lawyers made monkeys out of police witnesses, prosecutors, and the bench.⁴ The fines were derisory. 'Two hundred marks or twenty days,' he recorded, 'for libeling Ia,' Weiss's political police.'⁵

He received his free travel pass. 'Let my voyaging now commence,' he wrote, 'at the Republic's expense!'⁶ The new Reichstag opened on June 13. The twelve Nazis marched in wearing uniform. Meeting afterward, the Nazi bloc assigned to him the portfolios of culture and internal affairs.⁷ The Strassers blamed him in their publications for the party's poor showing in Berlin.⁸ He sensed Gregor's hostility, but decided he could live with it. They were equals now. As he limped down the steps there was a ripple of applause that he recorded for posterity in his diary.

After a month the Reichstag, under joint pressure from its communist and Nazi members, approved an amnesty for all political crimes committed before 1928. Dr Weiss saw his tormentor's slate suddenly wiped

July 14, 1928

66 II: THE GAULEITER OF BERLIN

all but clean. A year later Berlin police headquarters would endorse file, 'All judgments and outstanding cases against Dr Göbbels have been quashed or annulled on the basis of the Law of Amnesty passed on 14, 1928.'

LATE in June 1928 he transferred the gau HQ to No. 77 Berliner Str in Charlottenburg—fourteen newly furnished rooms on one floor, *not* bad going for eighteen months,' he reflected.⁹

His health, never robust, had suffered in the election campaign.¹⁰ now felt perpetually tired; overshadowing the head- and backaches, *which* he attributed to nervous problems, was the permanent agony of his *sick* encased lame leg—'chronic pains and unpleasantness,' he would write that autumn, before a phrase which suggests he was beginning to doubt his own sexuality: 'plus the malicious gossip that I'm a homosexual.' Such gossip was inevitable. Here he was, a young man of thirty, of *brash* courage, and notoriety, and yet: a bachelor. Seeking company he was likely to pick Tonak or Schweitzer for a walk *à deux* around the park Wannsee or a visit to the lofty new Radio Tower as to scoop up two three of his female staff for a stroll in Potsdam.¹² 'I am sick in mind and body,' he would confess.¹³ Since doctors found nothing wrong, he resorted to that most German of remedies, a *Kur*; that did help him so he imagined, which was what mattered.¹⁴ His club foot never ceased hurting—'for weeks on end now,' he would write early in 1929. 'So many times it just blights my whole day.'¹⁵

His worries had been magnified by the onset of his father's last illness in the late spring of 1928. Laden with filial remorse Joseph Goebbels visited the paternal home as often as he could, sat silently watching the gray-bearded old man, wept as he felt the thin, bony fingers, and romanticized each farewell wave in his diary in case it was the last.

See note 17
In July 1928 Adolf Hitler came to Berlin. Goebbels wrote that he was fond of him as a son is of his father, and staged a huge private meet for him at Friedrichshain. 'Although it was the summer silly season wrote young Horst Wessel admiringly, 'the hall was packed out. What else could do that in high summer?' New members flooded in at Hitler's speech.¹⁶ Before Hitler left, Goebbels vented his anger about Otto Strasser, and the Führer waffled reassuringly about winding up the Strassers' publishing house in Berlin. He mentioned that he and his stepsister Angela Raubal would be taking a trip to the island of Heligoland with Angela's daughter 'Geli'—would Dr Goebbels like to join them? Knowing Geli already, Goebbels jumped at the chance.¹⁷

He has met Geli Raubal, Hitler's barely nineteen-year-old niece, in Munich four months before. Unaware of the nearly forty-year-old Hitler's proprietary interest in her, he has hatched plans to bring her to Berlin.

He is still pining for Anka Stalherm. But married to the humdrum Georg Mumme she lives in Weimar and he has not seen her for years.

must have a good, beautiful woman!' he writes in his unpublished diary at the start of 1928.¹⁸ Göring has come back from Sweden married to a beautiful Swedish countess; Hess is marrying his Ilse.¹⁹

His *cri de cœur* seems answered by a teenaged girl working at headquarters, a girl of, he writes, almost Asiatic submissiveness.²⁰ 'I love Tamara von Heede,' he records. 'Wonder if she loves me? Hardly. That's how it always is: what you get, you don't want; and what you want, you don't get.'²¹ Tamara puzzles the naïve and sexually innocent gauleiter by being off color at monthly intervals.²² One evening canoodling with him in the park she freezes him with a thoughtless remark, perhaps about his foot. She makes up the next day with a basket of fruit and other delights.²³ Their friendship causes the usual tensions at HQ.²⁴ Meanwhile Anka abruptly returns to his life: there she is, standing in the doorway of the hotel foyer at Weimar after a renewed staging of his play *The Wanderer*. By his own account Goebbels trembles and stammers with joy at seeing his long-lost love.

For half an hour Anka pours out her heart about her joyless marriage: Mumme has concealed from her until after the marriage that he is infertile from syphilis; her four-month-old son Christian is by another man. Goebbels is under her spell again, it is as though they never parted. 'O, l'amour!' his pen exclaims after he has lain awake all night. 'I am like a child!'²⁵ Tamara is disconsolate that Anka has surfaced again from his past; nevertheless he phones Anka from Berlin and they agree to meet again.²⁶ A few days later she phones him twice, weeping, in the middle of the night, saying she wants to come to Berlin; divorcing Mumme, he suggests, is her only escape. She arrives at his apartment but receives only coffee and sympathy as she rehearses her entire tragic life once more for him.²⁷

'I have kissed her,' he writes afterward, 'and a lucky star has crossed from her to me.' After Anka departs, Tamara phones. 'Poor Tamara!' he writes, and: 'Poor Anka!'—and many a reader of his diary will agree.

He spends another day with his goddess in Weimar soon after. 'I love her, she loves me, neither of us says it but we both know it.'²⁸ At Easter however there is an awkward scene when her husband shows up. Goebbels capitulates. 'I'm off. Curtly and formally took leave of them both. . . . I'm shutting off my heart. For good! Great tasks wait upon me. . . . Before me stands a nation! Germany!'²⁹

A few days later, great task or no, he phones her Weimar number. Dr Mumme answers and Dr Goebbels hangs up. 'God only helps those,' he writes on a bouquet of flowers for her, 'who help themselves. Farewell. ULEX.'³⁰

He is not blind to the rest of the fairer sex. There is a Dora, a 'hysterical lover' who puts a letter through his door threatening to poison herself ('Doesn't know me too good,' he comments callously. 'I've already yielded far too much to this hussy. Let her do it if she really must. I can't say anything but no').³¹ 'Since I have set eyes again on Anka,' he sighs, justifying his sexual inactivity, 'all female beauty pales.'³² It is therefore

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no surprise to see him shortly alighting from a train at Weimar or way home from Wiesbaden, embracing Anka on the platform and she a compartment for a few minutes until the next halt at Weissenfels icy hand may well have clutched at his heart as she chatters away, because she now hints at leaving Mumme for Goebbels in Berlin. The ar suitor takes refuge in the language of a cheap novel. 'Farewell, farewell he writes in the diary. 'She waves until we are out of sight of each other. He spends the next days in a guilty panic. No word comes from Weimar. Will she really leave her Georg? And what then?

Dr Goebbels appraises the alternatives: there is 'a pretty Miss Bö at Schweinfurt; there is Willi Hess's little sister ('a darling thing, unfortunately not good looking'; he will find the same trouble with a Bettge on Borkum island too—'Pity she's not prettier.'³⁵) He has to stay at Weimar late in May, and diffidently phones the Mumme household. A voice tells him that Madam is away.³⁶ Back in Berlin the next day bumps into Dora, who has not poisoned herself after all: few girls nowadays. 'Anka is to blame for all this,' he writes helplessly. 'She brought me to the point where women are just playthings. The revelation of a creature spurned.'³⁷

She is soon forgotten in Berlin. He is overhauling his gau, appointing Reinhold Muchow his chief of organization on July 1, 1928.³⁸ He resumed work on 'Michael,' rewriting, dictating, proof-reading, mailing it for Franz Eher Verlag to publish that autumn. He goes on a chaotic gau outing down Brandenburg's waterways, a wasted day we need not for one beautiful girl. 'Without a word,' he romanticizes again, 'we are in love. Neither of us betrays this by the slightest sign, but it is so.' Chemicals are brewing within the crippled, now thirty-year old Dr Joseph Goebbels which he still does not care to test. 'I'll go to pot altogether he fears, 'if I can't get together with women.' They are out there, besieging him, but he is searching for a woman that he does not know. Two days later at Bayreuth, as the curtain goes up on the last act of 'Tristan' finds a stunning beauty next to him: 'We partake of a little feast of love without a word between us—just two glances, two sighs. And then she is gone. . . . The whole evening I am at my wit's end.'⁴⁰

Matrimony is claiming all his friends. Even Karlheinz Kölsch, 'Pill his closest friend and rival from those Freiburg days, gets married in August. Tipsy and reeking of liquor he throws his arms around the lieutenant gauleiter and kisses him; Goebbels recoils, fearful that they might be seen. 'Ghastly,' he exclaims in his diary. 'Kölsch always was an asshole. Together they pen a postcard to Anka at Weimar.'⁴¹

So it goes on: his roving eye feasts on every female, spinster or spoken for, and ravishes or rejects them all—the arrestingly beautiful wife of Robert Ley, and a pompous editor's wife with whom he falls deeply in love for, probably, hours at a time.⁴² Each time his train passes through Weimar he peers out, hoping for a glimpse of Anka.⁴³

In September the chase is suddenly on again. This time, his quarry is young Hannah Schneider, a true Germanic beauty from Mecklenburg

Oct 17, 1921

She is a member of the party's Women's Order. After a hard day's work at his desk, Goebbels begin to look forward to negotiations with the order which he previously hated. He adores Hannah's natural childishness (she is in her late teens). She is pretty and clever, and another virgin. It is surely interesting that he writes of her as this 'glisteningly clean maiden.'⁴⁴ Let no careless biographer maintain that he has advanced far with the fairer sex even now: strolling in the Tiergarten after taking her to her first movie, he steals a chaste kiss from Hannah. 'She blushed like a child when I kissed her neck,' he writes, rejoicing in his adventure.⁴⁵ He delights in her innocent chatter and writes more than once approvingly of her *Jungfräulichkeit*, her chastity.⁴⁶ But he is aware of her limitations. He needs a more mature woman, while Hannah is 'a totally innocent child.'

A little bombshell comes from Weimar. Anka writes that she is indeed divorcing Mumme and coming to work in Berlin.⁴⁷ Goebbels reflects how much women have hurt him, and how much they have hurt for him too. 'Is this to be a new tragedy,' he wonders, 'in which I am to be cast in the leading role?' He tells little Hannah none of this. He writes cautiously back to Anka: Perhaps they might meet on Tuesday October 2 in Weimar? The next day, speaking at Hasenheide, he sights Hannah sitting reverently as though in a church pew, smiling with childlike attentiveness. A telegram comes from Anka: yes, Tuesday. In Weimar, they sit up late together. She tells him that she is now in two minds again. Meanwhile, should she come to Berlin for a month or two? 'That might well be ticklish,' senses Goebbels in his diary.

Hannah falls silent. 'She loves me, she loves me not?' wonders Goebbels. 'I'm damned if I can tell.'⁴⁸ Shortly a letter comes, spelling out the answer: she does not. Goebbels limps around baffled, groping for an explanation. 'Okay. So I shall have to stay lonely. To be famous or to be loved? That is the question.'⁴⁹ On October 12 Hannah reappears at gau HQ. 'Suddenly the hour is filled with lustrous happiness,' writes Goebbels, extracting much pathos from a scene which must have cruelly punctured his male vanity. 'I kiss her squarely on her full red lips. And then she confesses to me that she loves another. She only came to me because I was so lonely. A terrible discovery. From a thousand heavens I plummet to the depths of a thousand hells.'⁵⁰ Innocently twisting her teenaged knife, Hannah writes asking if she can be a good sister to him instead. 'Always the same,' fulminates Goebbels hopefully. 'First these women just want to be your sister. Then whoopee, it's mistress instead.' 'Unhappy love,' he summarizes tersely on October 17, 1928: 'There can be no such thing for a Man with a Mission.'⁵¹

1928

9: Conjuring up Spirits

THERE was a side to Dr Goebbels which few suspected. He believed in the occult. At the very end of his life he would have horoscopes cast for himself, for Hitler, and for the Third Reich. Scattered through the earlier diaries are references to seances at which dark forces were consulted. On leave in Bavaria in 1928 he was to be found conjuring up the spirit of Leo Schlageter. The great martyr of Ruhr resistance 'appeared' and, when asked Who Shall Save Germany, replied with a tact that was commendable under the circumstances, 'Your Hopes Only in Hitler.'¹ In 1929 Goebbels and his friends again conjured up the spirits. 'I don't really believe in such frauds,' he wrote airily, 'but it's usually quite amusing.'² Visiting Princess Wied in August 1930 he found an astrologer there who 'conjured forth from the stars precisely what we would expect to happen anyway.' Goebbels' apparent cynicism was belied however by the diary passage that follows: 'Auwi [Prince August-Wilhelm] is very skeptical, but I am flabbergasted. He unquestioningly accepted the mystic powers of graphology. He allowed the party lawyer Ludwig Weissauer to read his hand; Weissauer told him that it betrayed sensitivity and a determination to fight on.'

Weissauer found one line to be flawed. That, guessed Goebbels, must be Anka. Since losing her he had had nothing but a sense of loneliness.

AIDED by young Horst Wessel, he had spent the summer of 1928 organizing a Hitler Youth detachment and a Nazi student association in Berlin. But those months saw the first problems with the brownshirted SS battalions of party stormtroopers. They had believed his earlier talk of revolution; but with Hitler's newfound belief in the legal approach to power they saw the day when they might storm the Reichstag receding. Friction with their commander Captain Stennes grew.⁵

Goebbels was in two minds. Unlike Hitler, he never wholly abandoned the idea of a putsch. He spent much of the summer organizing an SS march on Berlin, to culminate in a mass rally in Berlin's largest hall. It would be a show of power. In mid-August Stennes threatened to quit, taking several of his commanders with him.⁶ Goebbels told him of the planned 'rally.' 'We can do without a crisis at this moment,' he notified his diary. 'We must keep the peace. I convince [Stennes], against my own convictions.'⁷ At the party's annual general meeting in Munich at the end of August Hitler directed him to concentrate his efforts now on Berlin.

while Brandenburg would be detached to form a separate gau.⁸

Hitherto Goebbels had merely reacted to political events. Now he seized the political initiative. He proclaimed the last week of September 1928 'Dawes Week,' seven days of intense campaigning in Berlin against the pact obliging Germany to pay her war reparations bill regardless of her economic plight. He printed a special issue of *Angriff* which sold sixty thousand copies.⁹ Growing bolder, he risked hiring for the first time the Sport Palace in Potsdamer Strasse for the third Brandenburg Rally (Märkertag); to fill the cavernous building, which could seat fifteen thousand people, he placarded the city with lurid posters announcing: 'On Saturday September 30 Adolf Hitler's Brownshirts will march into Berlin.'¹⁰ That day he drove out to Teltow to watch his brown army assemble. Four thousand S.A. men marched into the capital. At Steglitz town hall the immense throng, which Goebbels put at 'tens of thousands,' paused, bared their heads, and roared the national anthem before marching on through the city's frightened, wealthy West End to the Sport Palace building. With thousands of communists massing threateningly outside a riot began and the police opened fire. Four Nazis were seriously injured. Goebbels left under a barrage of rocks, jeers, and catcalls—'Hatred and love,' he philosophized. The next day's 'non-Jewish' press was largely sympathetic, the rest less so.¹¹

'A day of triumph,' he concluded in his diary: he had Anka sending him telegrams from Weimar; he had young Hannah; he had fifteen thousand Berliners hanging on his every word.¹² A letter of congratulations came from Hitler.¹³ A few days later the Führer appeared unannounced at gau HQ in Berliner Strasse and repeated his congratulations in person. He reiterated that Goebbels alone had his confidence in Berlin, and he spoke harshly about Dr Otto Strasser. The gauleiter could now afford to give his staff, over twenty strong, a substantial pay rise.

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DECIDING to move into larger lodgings, he finds just what he needs in Württembergische Strasse in west Berlin, closer to gau HQ. His landlady is a Miss Grothe, an elderly spinster, as he is careful to record.¹⁴ The apartment has a pleasant drawing room. He feels entitled to some luxury—'I have naught else, neither wife nor child, and only seldom a lover.' He uses the word *Geliebte*, although 'girlfriend' would seem more justified. Most are passing fancies, like one Eva Otto—she donates a piano to the new apartment.¹⁵ On October 31, 1928, the day before he moves in, his secretary circulates the new address, requesting it be kept secret 'for obvious reasons.' A copy goes to Anka.¹⁶

He is still terrified of any hint of homosexuality, a criminal perversion which seems particularly prevalent in the Nazi party. Unable to form lasting relationships with women, he loiters in cafés or haunts movie theatres with his chauffeur Tonak or cartoonist Schweitzer, his only friends.¹⁷ After major events he returns to his empty apartment and mopes. He needs a woman, as 'a starter-motor,' but the malicious gossip

Nov 4, 1928

72 II: THE GAULEITER OF BERLIN

will not go away. 'It's too filthy even to think about without ^{being} ashamed,' he insists to his diary the day after moving into his bachelor apartment. 'Decay! Decay! It must be expunged, radically ruthlessly.'¹⁸ His reasoning is odd, however—'Because if the enemy learns something like that, we shall be finished.' Is homosexuality to Goebbels, this 'immoral vice,' a crime in the detection rather than in commission? 'It's got to be stamped out radically,' he writes on Nov 4. 'It's all so dirty'—again, an interesting choice of word—'It's all so that it would preferable not to hear or see it at all.' Several of his offi are unmasked as homosexuals, and Goebbels does not know whor trust.¹⁹ 'It's so alien to my own nature,' he writes, 'that I can't v up for them even the vestigial sympathy that I do for any common murderer.'²⁰

Over the next months Goebbels, now thirty-one, tries relations with half a dozen teenage girls but his eye soon roves on. Talking to Josef Terboven his eye lights upon the Essen gauleiter's attractive, unfortunately rather aging, sister.²¹ When Hitler visits Berlin with niece Geli Raubal in mid-November, Goebbels again finds her 'almost lovable' but wisely smites from his mind the horrendous idea of cuckolding Führer.²² He visits the party's Woman's Order, despite their harri Elsbeth Zander, and spends an evening watching the healthy young dance and sing: surely a sign that he is desperate for female compan

IN 1928 alone he spoke at 188 meetings. He seemed not to know f ~~On November 3~~ that year he led the S.A. into one of Berlin's Red suburbs. 'A lot of blood will flow,' he accepted. 'But I shall be w^{ith} them.'²³

His *Book of Isidor* had sold out and was reprinting. Dr Weiss unsuccessfully canvassed his prosecution for felonious remarks about Rathenau murder.²⁴ When the Reichstag reconvened in November th were immediate moves to strip Goebbels of his immunity. He ha the 'rotten' parliamentary system; he behaved outrageously during debates, and attracted several reprimands.²⁵ The ban on Hitler speak publicly in Prussia had been lifted. On November 16 Goebbels presen him with an overflowing Sport palace, martial music, and the ceremon entry of Berlin's Nazi standards as a visible sign of the Party's grow might. As Hitler spoke eight hundred police protected the hall and audience.²⁶ The two men sat far into the night with Hess; Goebbels co not help noticing that Adolf now had his Geli, and Hess his Ilse, wh he was still alone.

The next day the body of Hans-Georg Küttemeyer, a Scharführer No. 15 Sturm of the Berlin S.A., was fished out of the Landwehr car What Goebbels called the 'Judenpresse' scoffed that Küttemeyer killed himself, and there was report of a morose letter to his wife abo their poverty. Goebbels was not going to lose his first major martyr ti easily ('Never have liars stooped so low!'); he wrote a eulogy in *Ang* and began a noisy propaganda campaign.²⁷ The party buried Küteme

Nov 21, 1928

CONJURING UP SPIRITS 73

with full honors on November 21. Thousands gathered at the graveside. 'Marxists' Goebbels' street placards challenged. 'Why did you murder the worker Kùtemeyer?'²⁸ The police hefted into his dossier a note that he had propagated 'untrue statements' on the case. But the S.A. man's two killers were caught and given suspended sentences of two and four months for manslaughter in June 1929. 'Three Jews as judges,' observed Dr Goebbels, and vowed hatred, vengeance, and retribution against the system.²⁹

Goebbels
At first
he thinks it's
suicide,
and
proceeds
in the
opposite
direction.
Later, he
is enraged.
A murder.
How
dastardly!

As the appointed 'minister of culture' of the little National Socialist faction he went more often to the theatre and the movies, which were still silent. He took Schweitzer to a love film, only to walk out before the end, but he found the romantic scenes in *Anna Karenina* a delight.³⁰ Once he went to an all-Negro revue; he sniffed at their 'silly doo-dah'ing and dancing' and was annoyed when the public roared applause.³¹ He found Buster Keaton unfunny and incomprehensible. After seeing his first Hollywood movie, again with Schweitzer, he recorded: 'Sheer hell. Jewish kitsch. Virtually all you saw were Hebrews.'³² The dominance of the Jews in this relatively new industry did not elude him.³³ They were everywhere. He heard Offenbach's opera *The Tales of Hoffmann* on the radio and dismissed it in his diary as Jewish music. 'The Jewish question,' he added intensely, 'is the question of all questions.'³⁴

His enthusiasm for the Russian cinema, like much else from Moscow, was undeniable. He viewed Soviet film director Sergei Eisenstein's silent epic *Ten Days That Shook the World*, and found its crowd scenes good but overburdened with party politics. 'We have a lot to learn from the bolsheviks,' he readily conceded, 'particularly in the fields of agitation and propaganda.'³⁵ He was thrilled by any film accompanied by Russian music.³⁶ Seeing Eisenstein's famous *Battleship Potemkin*, he rejoiced in this spectacle. The sub-titles were so cunningly phrased that they defied contradiction. 'That is what is really dangerous about this film,' he concluded. 'I wish we had such a film.'³⁷

Thus the power of the film as political propaganda dawned on him. He began to take an interest in the party's own film production efforts. He supervised the cutting of the film of his September 1928 rally in the Sport Palace, and helped with a little production called *Fight for Berlin*—his diary shows him driving out to Bernau to direct scenes involving three hundred S.A. men.³⁸ As the genre got into his blood, he produced a second Nazi movie, *With the Berlin S.A. to Nuremberg*.³⁹ At its premiere, he introduced it with a little homily on cinema as a propaganda weapon.⁴⁰

DECEMBER 1928 finds Joseph Goebbels tired but increasingly fulfilled. He spends hours orating to the Reichstag. He has his own newspaper. He has a piano. He has at last perfected his autobiographical drama *Michael* and is about to rewrite his working-class one-acter *Blood Seed* for the party's Wallner Theater.⁴¹ He will finish it in the Reichstag under the droning voice of some despised democrat. He sends copies to Ilse Hess

scene

1928 → 1929

Jan 20, 19.

74 II: THE GAULEITER OF BERLIN

and all his other friends—but even now Anka's is the only opinion cares about.⁴²

On December 9 we locate him, heart thumping, in a train steaming into Weimar's station. He finds her waiting on the platform, and I her the first proof copy of *Michael* (in which she is of course herself heroine) to come off the presses. 'We love each other as though but separates 1920 from now,' he writes afterwards. 'She buries her head in my chest and weeps.' He misses two trains in his distraction.⁴³ A 1 comes, returning the play: she is enthusiastic about it. 'She loves me swoons Goebbels in his notes, 'and I her.'⁴⁴ 'I had awaited your I with trepidation,' he replies, asking to see her again. He suggests I on Wednesday ('at 10:20 A.M.') or Erfurt ('at 11:51'). Something at these deliberately Brief Encounters pleases him: perhaps it is the real ing knowledge that any demands she makes on him will perforce limited to the short journey between two stations. 'I would like to things over with you,' he writes her alluringly. 'I have got to do somet about rearranging my life now that I have put much of the past bel me with *Michael*.⁴⁵

No sooner has he lit this fresh candle for Anka in his heart than snuffed out by the breezy debut of a young Berlin girl on his staff, J Lehmann. She claims she's eighteen—a slender, gracious, rococo I doll who chatters and giggles all afternoon with that infuriating mix of brightness and inanity that females have long monopolized. She tends to be engaged to another, but folds into the little gauleiter's arms nonetheless and allows herself to be kissed before agreeing that she is engaged at all. 'So that's Jutta Lehmann,' he muses, captivated: 'I spotless, gracious girl.'⁴⁶ He wallows in feelings of spurious guilt, know that sooner or later he must sacrifice her too on the altar of his Missio He lies awake, thinking of her tiny hand waving as he drives away, tears in her eyes when he leaves for his own family fold at Christmas. is silent on his return and he sees her as 'a child, a lover, a comrade.' is lucky to possess her, he decides. 'She's a good listener. She sits as qu as a mouse just listening.'⁴⁸ One day she comes in floods of tears beca she thinks he's leaving; the next the sweet little schemer turns up wit basket of things for his apartment like a coffee machine and silverwa so that he can stay home of an evening. But he realizes that she is 'pu and must stay that way. By mid-January 1929 he is back, in soul & body, in Weimar with Anka.⁴⁹

Her husband Mumme is now ingratiating and servile to the gauleit Goebbels despises him. She comes on January 19 to his Weimar he and they sit talking until two-thirty A.M. on upturned crates at the railro station. He decides that Anka loves him. 'And I?' his asks his diary love her, uh, quite differently.⁵⁰

THE Nazi party nationwide now numbered over one hundred thousa members. Its leaders met at Weimar on January 20, 1929 to discuss t coming year. Young Heinrich Himmler, Hitler's bespectacled depu

1929

propaganda chief, reported on his efforts to develop their film and press propaganda.⁵¹ The only decisions which Goebbels recorded in Weimar were that the S.A. was to be more firmly anchored to the political leadership, and that the party was to adhere henceforth slavishly to the legal paths to power. 'Take note, Berlin!' noted Goebbels.⁵²

Hitler had every reason to counsel restraint. Confronted with the growing Nazi and communist lawlessness in Prussia, Albert Grzesinski had appealed to the Reich minister of the interior, Severing, for a permanent nationwide ban on these parties and their paramilitary formations. The terms imposed on defeated Germany by the peace treaty of 1921 provided adequate legal grounds.⁵³

Goebbels reluctantly bowed to Hitler's dictate. Issue No. 32 of *Angriff* portrayed a communist Red Front streetfighter and his Nazi counterpart, both bandaged and bleeding, shaking hands over the crumpled body of a Jew. 'The Day of Realization,' Schweitzer's prophetic caricature was captioned: 'The Dawn of the Third Reich.'⁵⁴

Since January 5, 1929 his newspaper had twelve pages.⁵⁵ Meanwhile he methodically built up the infrastructure of the gau. It helped that he had a brand-new limousine, a bright-blue open seven-seater landau built by Opel; its license tag was IA-53398—Goebbels claimed that a German idealist living in Argentina had just donated it to the gau.⁵⁶ The big car gave the crippled gauleiter power, authority, and mobility. Taking his burly escort with him he used it to tour the sections in red-hot areas like Prenzlauer Berg, Friedrichshain, Alexander Platz, and Kreuzberg.⁵⁷ Muchow was doing fine work on the factory floor, establishing cells in big plants like Knorr Brake at Lichterfelde. Too late the marxists woke up to this danger. Goebbels' schools of speaking and politics were also improving. Once he even let Gregor Strasser address a course.⁵⁸ Standards here were often higher than in the Reichstag where, as Goebbels himself put it, listening to long boring speakers was like being a fine pianist and having to hear some lout grinding away on a magnificent grand piano.⁵⁹

Great though his conceit about his own oratory was, Goebbels conceded that Hitler's was better. In fact their styles were different. Hitler's speeches were predictable and repetitious; Goebbels' were more analytical, executed with a thrilling elocution and clarity. Albert Krebs later stated that his Nazis in Hamburg often debated which was better; those who opted for Goebbels sometimes indicated that he would make a better party leader too.⁶⁰ The two men were in equal demand all over Germany. 'We lead real gypsy lives,' Hitler had commiserated with him a few days after Weimar.⁶¹

On character, however, Goebbels found serious fault with Hitler at this time, a tendency to let things slide. He felt that the Führer should get his other men boning up already on their later duties. ('My task,' he already knew in 1929, 'is to be Propaganda and Public Enlightenment'.)⁶² Only Alfred Rosenberg towered above the 'beerhall' milieu of Hitler's Munich cronies.

Geli
Paul

March 9, 1929

76 II: THE GAULEITER OF BERLIN

BACK in Berlin after Weimar, Goebbels is subjected to a scene by Tar He feels sorry for her, but she has lost the submissive 'Asian' quality valued before in her. What else is he looking for? It is not sex. Late 'sweet chatterbox' Jutta Lehmann, still one week shy of eighteen, turns up and keeps him 'tempestuous' company—*stürmisch*, evidently another diary buzzword—until eleven P.M. 'How Jutta will weep,' he notes, almost sadistically, 'when the time comes for us to part!'⁶³ He is addicted to the company of teenage girls, but prefers them perhaps to bare any except their intellects. When Kütemeyer's widow turns out to have notions of her own he shrieks in his diary, 'For God's sake let's keep we out of politics.'⁶⁴ In fact, he hates most if not all of the human race except for Jutta and Anka, both of whom know how to mother him.⁶⁵

He yearns for Anka, the forbidden passion of his life. On February 1929 he takes a sheet of Reichstag notepaper and tries to set up another tryst: 'It would be glorious if you could come to Berlin for a few days. On Friday March 8 there is an important and sensational session in Reichstag, and on Sunday the tenth my new drama [*Blood Seed*] is being premiered at the Wallner Theatre. It's sold out already.' He signs off ULEX, just as in the old days.⁶⁶

MARCH 9, 1929. Anka phones. She's coming this afternoon for two days' visit. . . . In the afternoon worked at home. Frightful news: communists have stabbed two S.A. men to death in Schleswig-Holstein [Herm Schmidt and Otto Streib]. The first storm cones! Blood seed, from which the new Reich shall grow.

Anka arrives looking the picture of a cultured lady. He shows her over the Reichstag, then takes her to a patriotic movie starring swashbuckling Emil Jannings with a powerful plot about a man giving his life for his people. In the Rheingold bar afterwards she yet again pours out her heart about her unhappy marriage, until two A.M. They sit side by side at Sunday's première of his play, which events in Schleswig-Holstein have suddenly rendered so topical. Over a meal at Kempinski he has one unexpected difference with Anka, on the Jewish problem: now it is she who does not grasp it. Privately he reflects on the happiness that might have been. 'But,' he adds, priggishly distorting history, 'I had to choose: her, or something greater, my Mission.' Then, 'Leave-taking Farewell,' he writes, slipping effortlessly into the role of scriptwriter again. 'She smiles.'⁶⁷

His private life is becoming more dishonest. While he writes, and teenaged Jutta cooks for him, he is agonizing over the married Anka returning to her worthless Georg. A few days later his diary encodes him as gossiping with 'the Gypsy'—Anneliese Haegert, another 'darling child.' 'Most women are boring,' he concludes, 'particularly the good-looking. But I suppose it's enough that they do look good.'⁶⁸

After he sees Anka again at Weimar on March 19, her husband comes to fetch her. It is the first time Goebbels has seen Mumme, and he seems ashamed of him. 'That is her husband?' sympathizes Goebbels.

March 24, 1922

CONJURING UP SPIRITS 77

'Oh, Anka!' Georg Mumme civilly invites him to lunch the next day at their little household at No. 14 Johann-Albrecht Strasse; Goebbels has so often tried to visualize their home. Her baby Christian is a stubborn little boy; seeing the child hurts Goebbels more than he expects. 'That was some situation you snared me in,' he reproaches her in a letter. 'I felt like a fifth wheel on the wagon.' Later he invites her to join the gau's Easter outing to the Harz mountains ('The car's at the doctor's,' he writes with a levity that belies his nervousness, 'but will be discharged at the weekend'). He adds that she must of course invite her Georg along too. 'Pity you can't see from the letter how I stammer out those words.'⁶⁹

Goebbels has the dull but comforting sensation that perhaps he can never marry, because there are so many women that he is fond of.⁷⁰

MARCH 24, 1922. Afternoon at home. Anneliese Haegert is coming round. How am I to meet her? Anka, sweet woman!

Evidently he comes clean about Anka because the Gypsy leaves in tears. Women, he ruminates, have only one real use—as moles planted inside hostile agencies like police HQ or the League of Human Rights.⁷¹

On the Easter outing Anka arrives wearing a costly leather coat, of the same gray-green hue as her eyes. She has brought Georg Mumme along but pointedly ignores him throughout, although he continues to sing the gauleiter's praises to her. Goebbels finds him insufferable: Mumme gulps down his beer and cracks painfully pointless jokes; but it is Georg who shares Anka's bed each night and not the gauleiter. 'Thus,' writes Goebbels, 'vengeance exacts a belated, but infinitely crueler, revenge.' Georg utters not a murmur of protest as Goebbels squeezes into the back seat next to Anka and, Goebbels silently asks himself, staring at the husband, why should he? 'Don't I have a greater right to this woman than you, you ignoramus?' In ancient Goslar Georg tactfully lets them stroll off together like lovers and returns that evening reeking of lust and liquor. Goebbels spends another sleepless night elsewhere under the same roof.

At daybreak they drive off through the rain, snow, and ice. Beneath the warming travel rug Goebbels feels Anka's hand seeking his. Unseen, she slips onto his finger the ring her widowed mother gave her.⁷²

1930

1929

78

10: A Rather Obstinate Gentleman

HE had the uneasy feeling that he was leading a charmed life. He wrote to Anka that he would actually welcome some setback, preferably a minor one, to help break the spell. 'I have liquidated everything ugly from the past,' he wrote, referring perhaps to *Michael Blood Seed*, 'and can now contemplate the future with greater fortitude.'

One ugly item from the past still haunted him: The Catholic charity in Cologne now instructed lawyers in Berlin to extract from him the five hundred marks still unpaid from his student loan twelve years before. The lawyers served a writ.² The court awarded judgment in default April 6, 1929. A few days later the bailiffs called and glued their traditional paper cuckoo to his radio set, the only item of value in his apartment. Still he did not pay up. 'We are evidently dealing,' the lawyers reported to Cologne, 'with a rather obstinate gentleman. . . . It is to be hoped that this spokesman of the National Socialist party will fight shy of declaring bankruptcy.'³ The charity calmly ordered the lawyers to have him bankrupted. On May 16 the bailiffs removed his beloved radio—with piano, the only instrument he had wherewith to amuse his girlfriend and sent it to be auctioned.⁴ When he appealed, the Catholics claim they acted repressively only when there was evidence of a 'ruthless attitude on the debtor's part. Not until February 1930 would he *make* the final payment, closing the ledgers on a rather puzzling episode.

True, he had weightier matters on his mind. 'Sunday morning,' he jotted on April 15. 'We march, right into the communist districts. I step in the thick of the mêlée and am recognized. Our men march unflinchingly through the catcalls and whistles of the Reds.'⁵ He was planning *ahead* for the Nuremberg rally in August and for an open-air rally in Berlin in September as a prelude to the important November municipal elections.

Constantly expanding his horizons, on May 10 he launched a National Socialist League of Schoolchildren at a jamboree of one thousand eagles, girls and boys. Cash was always a problem however.⁶ He pleaded with *Angriff* not to court a renewed prohibition. Finding in one issue a blatant libel on their foreign minister Gustav Stresemann he himself ordered unsold copies recalled—not that he was loath to wound the statesman. 'This plenipotentiary of German democracy,' he called him, 'somewhat fat, jaundice-hued, perspiring, his little tricky eyes bedded carefully in cushions of fat, a smooth, rectangular forehead topped by an enormous expanse of bald head, there he stands, in the midst of his beloved Jew

1930 1929

SUDDENLY there is Xenia. Her name means 'Stranger'; she is another teenaged girl, and Goebbels risks a first letter to her just after writing to Anka.⁸ Xenia von Engelhardt's unexpected visit to Dr Goebbels is the start of a platonic friendship which endures almost to the end of his bachelor days. She wangles her way past the sentinels posted on his heart by the usual wiles, pouring out her woes about her unfaithful boyfriend, laughing, blushing, and instinctively gauging his needs.⁹ Once she stages a scene and turns on her heel; then stalks back and spends a night with him which he describes as *glückdurchbebt*, quaking with happiness. By May 4 they have captured each other, each presuming victory. They take in a Greta Garbo movie (another 'divine woman,' sighs Goebbels). After another tiff, Xenia storms off, returns, knocks on his door. He does not open—he is reading the Sunday papers and, yet again, Moeller van den Bruck's *The Third Reich*. That afternoon they go for a row, and make up again. 'And then,' records Goebbels, picking his words carefully, 'comes a long, blessed night, filled with silence. Xenia is all modesty and sacrifice.'¹⁰

Back at his lodgings he finds a letter from the eternal temptress, Anka. She hopes to see him at Weimar. 'Poor Anka,' he notes, 'but she wants it no other way.' When he reaches Weimar Anka realizes that Xenia was coming between them, and bursts into tears. He returns to Berlin early. Here Xenia phones him, fearful on account of Weimar and Anka, as the smug gauleiter records.¹¹ Vacillating between the two women, he writes back in Berlin, 'I love Xenia a lot, because she is so young and *unberührt* [sexually innocent] and all self sacrifice and goodness. Anka is too scatterbrained.'¹² A letter comes from Anka with her photograph. He writes back proposing that he returns to Weimar on Sunday week? 'But then we'll probably have to hang around with G. all day and can't talk about the things we're interested in.'

At this instant in his complex epistolic devotions, Xenia arrives. Goebbels concludes his letter to Anka with a hurried evasion: 'Sorry can't write much today. . . . I'm about to fly to Dortmund.' But just as he is, in fact, dining at his lodgings with Xenia, the phone rings. A voice announces, 'Hitler here;' he is in Berlin. Unable to conceal his joy, Goebbels dashes off the last line of the letter to Anka: 'Life is beautiful, O Queen! Yours, ULEX,' and, abandoning Xenia, he hurries off to Hitler. There is no doubting his order of priorities now.¹³

GOEBBELS sat with Hitler and Hess that night until two A.M. Hitler asked if he would take over the Reichspropagandaleitung, propaganda at national level, traveling down to Munich every fortnight for this with a second home there. Goebbels was uncertain, and Hitler tried to tempt him. 'After the party rally,' the gauleiter noted, 'we shall all motor down to Italy for study purposes. . . . I am to get a new Mercedes just for this.' The question was left unresolved¹⁴ and in July Hitler again failed to lure Goebbels down to Munich to this end.¹⁵

In Berlin, he felt he was somebody. His S.A. was growing fast. On May

scene

scene?

June 8, 1929

80 II: THE GAULEITER OF BERLIN

26, at Frankfurt-on-Oder, he took the salute at a parade of two thousand S.A. men and heard the bands play a stirring new march with words written by Horst Wessel, 'Die Fahne Hoch!' (Hold the Flag High). It would become a second national anthem.

He itched to use the S.A. to seize power, although Hitler had told him 'We must now learn to wait and above all avoid a ban.'¹⁶ Hitler had good reason to fear a ban. The communists had begun violent disturbance in Berlin; in fighting after they threw up barricades on May Day nine people were killed and one thousand arrested.¹⁷ To Goebbels' disappointment Grzesinski banned his main opponent, the militant Red Front. In the resulting debate demanded by the communists on June 8 Goebbels spoke for forty minutes using language that differed little from theirs. The essence of the government's policy must be foreign, not domestic politics. 'They brandish the palm frond abroad,' he scoffed, 'and the police truncheon at home. They are skulking pacifists abroad, but bloodthirsty militarists at home, determined to choke any nationalist resistance at birth... They sign slave-diktats abroad and enact a Law for the Protection of the Republic at home!' Recalling that it was Severing who had banned Hitler from speaking, Goebbels mocked: 'Every Jew, in national pacifist, and traitor has the right of free speech but not a German soldier four times wounded on the battlefield, on the pretext that he is a foreigner.' The Nazi party had, he recalled, been dissolved in Berlin although it had erected no barricades. 'We just tossed a lush out of a public meeting after boxing his ears.' The Reichstag itself had annulled Gregor Strasser's immunity because he had dared to call the Republic a 'moneybags-colony.' Countless civil servants had been disciplined joining the National Socialists.

Goebbels teasingly added that he had no intention of mentioning private affairs of the Prussian minister of the interior—'Whether or not for instance Mr Grzesinski travels with his "lovely wife" to Vienna and it turns out the lady's not his "lovely wife" at all'—such things were purely a question of taste.¹⁸ Nor would he dwell upon the fact that their police president had been chief carnival clown of Mainz before the war ('Don't get me wrong. We're not complaining that he was chief carnival clown. Merely that he still is'). As for Dr Weiss ('whom we must not call Isidore' he had now sued Goebbels and his men twenty-eight times for calling him a Jew. 'So this police chief has himself recognized how demeaning it is to be a Jew, and he considers it a libel to be properly identified by what we would call his religion or what he would call his race.' 'The time will come,' he shrilled in his peroration, 'when it will not be our party who brings this system crashing down, but the people itself.'¹⁹

Once more that month, June 1929, he addressed the Reichstag, on the suffocating Law for the Protection of the Republic. After blandly read out, to loud protests, a letter written by 'the Jewish mega-swindler' Julius Barmat to the former chancellor Heinrich Bauer promising him 'another thousand or fifteen hundred U.S. dollars' if needed, Goebbels snapped that in forty years their former Kaiser had not had so many people

charged with *lèse-majesté* as often as Prussia's prime minister Otto Braun had wielded the hated law. He hurled this parting shot at the protesters: 'Once we have [the absolute majority] in the Reich, we shan't need a Law for the Protection of the Republic. We'll hang the lot of you!'²⁰ He happily noted afterward: 'The Reds foam with rage.'²¹ The Reichstag adjourned for the summer amid satisfying scenes of tumult.

THE stage was gradually filling with the characters who would dominate this, already the last one-third of Joseph Goebbels' life. He knew young Heinrich Himmler, Hitler's deputy chief of propaganda, as 'a small, fine man, good natured but perhaps a bit indecisive; a Strasser product.'²² On Hermann Göring he was ambivalent: he had got to know the overweight, bemuddled aviator better after sharing a platform with him in communist-dominated Friedrichshain in May. Göring bragged of having known Mussolini intimately while in Italian exile (in fact they had not met).²³ Partying with his eleven fellow Reichstag deputies at Göring's luxurious apartment in Badensche Strasse, the gauleiter envied his style of life. Six weeks later he recorded that Göring was 'as thick as two planks and lazy as a tortoise,' but it was the former air force captain who introduced him to Berlin's high society.²⁴ The princes, dukes, and counts foregathered in the Göring apartment, and Goebbels gradually acquired a proclivity for having blue-blooded men around him too. His opinions on the Baltic-born Alfred Rosenberg, cold, arrogant, and unapproachable, varied sharply; he feared that Rosenberg's opaque treatise, *The Myth of the Twentieth Century*, would cause friction with the church.²⁵ Surprisingly, he also disapproved of Julius Streicher's 'Jew mania.' 'This naked anti-semitism,' he recorded, 'is too primitive. The Jew can't be blamed for everything. We are as much to blame as anybody, and until we accept that we'll never find our way.'²⁶ But by 1930 he had a soft spot even for Streicher, probably because Hitler did too. 'I like him a lot,' he noted, 'he's a real [knorke] guy!'²⁷

Hitler towered over them all; but the picture of him, still only forty and unmarried, that is presented by the early Goebbels Diaries is an unfamiliar one—the Great Cunctator, taking refuge in the comforting milieu of his beer-bench pals in Munich, squandering the party's money, and for ever chasing young women, of whom Geli was, in Goebbels' despairing estimate, only the latest example.²⁸ But he had an instinctive, engaging manner. Meeting Goebbels' mother for the first time, Hitler remarked: 'She's just like my own.'²⁹

THE summer of 1929, a real tar-boiler in Berlin, sees Dr Goebbels still fighting shy of sexual relations. He observes his caricaturist Hans Schweitzer, whose drawing pen is the scourge of the highest officers of the Republic, living in mortal terror of his new wife. True, in her temporary absences Schweitzer briefly flutters his clipped wings, but she always returns wielding the clippers afresh.³⁰ Goebbels prefers to shuffle the pack—Xenia, Jutta, Anneliese, and occasionally a glimpse of Anka in

1929

Weimar. The kindly and submissive Xenia, now on school vacation, tries in vain to dominate him: she sulks for hours, then capitulates and returns for a night which the gauleiter mechanically logs as *selig*, 'blessed,' though with no supporting details. He serenades her on the piano, but has no intention of letting any woman capture him.³¹ He has witnessed Tonak's fate, totally ensnared by 'the hysterical females' of the Women's Order ('now the silly lad's gone and got engaged'). So Xenia runs the whole gamut of female trickery from flouncing and huffing affectionate letters, in vain.³² 'She is too easygoing and fluttery,' he reports to his diary. 'I don't think it'll last much longer.'³³ Setting off on vacation to Prerow, on a Baltic peninsula, that July he takes his secretary Joseph von Behr and does not invite Xenia, despite her tearful entreaties.

Too late, on July 5, Anka phones from Weimar—she has a sudden chance to visit Berlin for several days. Has the Great Moment finally arrived? Goebbels responds: 'I have thought about it all night. I cannot stay in Berlin; I would never get away from work. . . . I can't catch Prerow, and I'm fed up with Berlin.'³⁴ He suggests an alternative plan: that Anka come to a town fifty miles from Berlin and he will come and spend one or two days with her there. He even spells out the times and connections. But at Prerow his little fantasy is dashed. The telegraphs that she cannot come.

How about this plan [Goebbels then suggests]. I'll come down for a week to Weimar. Can you get me that room in your building again? I hope it won't be too expensive, as I want to go to England in August and to Italy in September. [In fact he undertakes neither foreign trip]. . . . Is it okay by you and Georg if I come on Saturday [July 20]? You'll have to leave me to myself a bit as I've a new book in my pocket. And don't tell anyone I'm coming to Weimar.

He begs her to cable her agreement—'Otherwise I may go up to Sweden for a week.'³⁵

The book is his drama *The Wanderer*, which he has begun to rewrite. Walking along the rainsoaked beaches he contemplates the placid gray-green Baltic and reflects how different it is from the wind-whipped North Sea—the one a gentle mistress, the other a diabolical old maid. The Great Moment in any young man's life is, it seems, drawing nigh.

But there is an unscheduled interlude. At a seaside concert he sits next to Erika Chulius, teenaged daughter of a local forester. Not good looking, he concedes, but provocative.³⁷ Is the chase on again? She presses a bouquet of flowers into his hand and for several days goes out with him as Josephine. Together they all go on a moonlight sail, and Erika talks and flirts and asks bright questions. He suddenly realizes that it is the young Anka that she reminds him of.³⁸

Back in Berlin, Xenia comes round for the evening; then it is on to Weimar for the great, week-long adventure with Anka. Georg Mumme carries their self-invited guest's baggage to the apartment just above their own in Johann-Albrecht Strasse. 'I am torn many ways,' confesses

July 25, 1929

A RATHER OBSTINATE GENTLEMAN 83

Goebbels in his diary that night. Something—is it fear?—is clutching at his vitals. He thinks a lot about Erika Chulius, and suddenly misses Prerow after all. But here he is, at last, only one floor above his dream woman. 'Anka,' he writes, 'is waiting downstairs for me.'³⁹

One day that week Georg goes off to Leipzig. Anka bustles happily around her old friend, cooking meals and looking after him, but nothing happens. Neither makes a move. The last day comes, July 25, 1929. Dr Mumme has again gone away, and Goebbels and Anka spend a blissful afternoon out together. Even at two A.M. Georg is still not back. Cursing himself, Goebbels is upstairs, standing irresolutely in the middle of his room when he hears a soft tap at the door. He opens: it is Anka, trembling with so far unrequited passion.

'Georg just phoned,' she announces. 'He can't get back tonight.'

Seized by panic, Goebbels firmly closes the door on her. Perhaps he has smelt an ambush; or just possibly he may have been motivated by those loftier emotions which he carefully sets down for posterity in his diary afterward:

No! I cannot abuse the hospitality and trust of Georg. Wretched though he is in my esteem: and though mine be far the greater right to this beloved woman standing before me in all her wondrous loveliness: Anka must leave the room.

I am trembling in every limb. I lie awake for a long, long time. But this morning I shall be able to look Georg squarely in the eye.⁴⁰

Their paths cross briefly at Weimar station—Goebbels and Mumme. 'Fare thee well, the both of you,' he writes. 'I'll have to leave you to your wretchedness and nothingness.... Greater missions await.'⁴¹

*D.T. I could see an
entrance into him at
last. The door to his
inner self was kept
open by his
self-justifications, what
a fraud at the core!*

scare !!

case

11: The Nightmare

JOSEPH Goebbels' obsessive devotion to Hitler was illustrated by incident in September 1929. He was about to speak at Breslau when a telegram signed 'Rosenberg' arrived: 'ADOLF HITLER KILLED ACCIDENT.' Goebbels swayed on his feet and nearly fainted. The telegram, a fake, left him a sobbing, nervous wreck. 'Only now,' he wrote afterward, 'do I realize what Hitler means to me and to the movement. Everything! Everything!'

The latter part of the year was dominated by the final illness of father and his campaign against the new Young Plan for the payment of reparations.² He embarked on the latter unwillingly, as it had been initiated by their 'reactionary' rivals the Stahlhelm and the D.N.V. (German National People's Party), who were demanding a referendum (*Völkische Bewegung*); but Hitler gave him no choice. Visiting Berlin on July the Führer told him he was meeting Alfred Hugenberg, chairman of the Deutsch-Nationale Volkspartei (D.N.V.P.), to discuss a joint campaign against the iniquitous diktat of Versailles and the Young Plan. The prospect of Hitler among these moth-eaten reactionaries alarmed radical Goebbels.³ In Nuremberg on the eve of the annual Party rally however, Hitler invited him to dine in his suite with him and Geli—pretty child,' noticed Goebbels again, and managed to get close to her in the group photographs later. He addressed the rally on propaganda and politics.⁴ With their great fireworks displays, concerts by the S.A. massed bands and torchlight marches, the famous Nuremberg rallies were beginning to take shape—though Goebbels could not help noticing with vexation the Stahlhelm dignitaries lined up on Hitler's platform. Three chartered trains had brought his men from Berlin. Erika Chul stepped out of the first. The Berlin stormtroopers marched snappily in the city center with Horst Wessel at the head of his *Sturm*.⁵ The S.A. contingent from the Palatinate wore white shirts; the French occupying authorities had banned the brown. 'The time will come,' Hitler promised them to cheers, 'when we'll have the shirts off the French!'

There was one episode with the S.A. that forewarned of trouble to come with them. Hitler was in mid-speech when the heavy doors burst open. Several hundred communists had arrived from Berlin under the leadership of Max Höltz, bent on staging a blood bath. The S.A. dealt with them roughly and, their bloodlust aroused, rampaged through the streets of Nuremberg afterwards leaving two dead and many injured

1929 (1928) ‡

Hitler sent a chalk-faced Goebbels out by car to call the stormtroopers to order. Horst Wessel showed particular bravery in reining in his young toughs. Walter Stennes, his S.A. commander, later said that the Brown-shirts would have taken over the city there and then had he and their national commander Franz von Pfeffer not headed off the catastrophe.⁶

THE evening after the riot Erika Chulius joins Goebbels, brimming with coy aspirations. She mentions that she has a twin sister: double-delight! To Goebbels' dismay Xenia von Engelhardt also suddenly appears, furious at his romantic foray to Weimar. Hoping no doubt to escape her, he drives with Erika over to picturesque Rothenburg. Downstairs the next morning he finds the importunate Xenia again. But as suddenly as this tearful apparition appears, it melts away.⁷ Back in Berlin he broods all day on the fair sex. 'Women!' he exclaims. 'Women are to blame for almost everything'⁸

For Anka, of course, he will always make an exception. Twice after the two A.M. Weimar fiasco, which must have wounded her deeply, he writes to her and cannot understand why she makes no reply. Twice he asks chattily if she has the 'time and inclination' to see him on his way through Weimar. Again no reply. 'How lazy you are at writing!' he chides her.⁹

'Here in Berlin all hell is loose,' he adds. And in a sense it is, because Erika and her twin Traute have come to drive him out to their forest home. He takes the 'insufferably jealous' Josephine von Behr along too. On September 29 he writes again to Anka. 'The Reichstag is meeting on important matters,' he explains, and suggests she ask Georg's permission to come to Berlin. 'You'd get to see all sorts of things.'¹⁰ She makes an excuse—she is not well. Goebbels apologizes that he cannot come to Weimar because of his parliamentary duties. 'It is just frightful,' he continues, writing from the Reichstag. 'In the long run one has to dispense with every friendship for the good of the cause.' He might be able, he adds, to fit in Weimar on Sunday. 'But ... I've also got to go home as my father is gravely ill.' 'Fare well!' he concludes. 'The division bell is ringing. It's showtime.'¹¹

None of these letters has been published before. He makes no mention of them in his diary. Anka has defeated him.

NOTIONS of nationalism had stirred only infrequently in his diaries until now. In October 1928 he had thrilled at the majestic airship Graf Zeppelin cruising over Berlin on her 112-hour flight to New Jersey; four weeks later, he and Schweitzer had watched the newsreel report on the voyage, furious at the unpatriotic jeers from an audience who only a few minutes later fiercely applauded a Soviet film.¹² In August 1929 he copied down the inscription on the Brandenburg Gate—'To all the World War dead'—and made the acid comment that they had forgotten to add: '—except the German.' The idea of taking over national propaganda began to appeal to him.¹³

‡

Aug 25, 1929

*He certainly
didn't want to be
a Gauleiter.*

Staying at Anka's house he had read Erich Maria Remarque's classic anti-war book, *All Quiet on the Western Front*. He had found it a spirited and even seditious work, and ventured the prediction: "years from now nobody will talk about this book any more."¹⁴ Na documentaries like *With Amundsen to the North Pole*, or the maintenance movie starring the delectable Leni Riefenstahl, enthralled him.¹⁵ He fully recognized the subtle persuasive power of the cinema: the advertising exhibition in Berlin he lingered at the movie section, a few days later he took his editor Dagobert Dürr to see the latest sensation, a talking film. He dismissed the production, *The Singing I* as kitsch, but the technological advance itself impressed him. 'Here the future,' he wrote, 'and we should be wrong to dismiss all this American gimmickry. Join it! Beat it!'¹⁶ He wanted to use sound films for propaganda. 'Here,' he repeated in November 1929, 'lies a giant future, particularly for us orators. The more the movement grows, more we must exploit technology.'¹⁷

In the approach to the city elections that month he was already using new techniques. He had posed for a propaganda film in his office. Their amateurish film *Struggle for Berlin* and two documentaries the Nuremberg rally were already circulating. Taking control of the propaganda in Berlin, he composed twenty placards. In the evening, he held training courses to ensure that all candidates emphasized the "socialist" policies. After a bloc meeting in October he noted with approval that all his fellow Reichstag deputies had come down firmly against the right wing.¹⁸

With himself at their head, constantly aware of his own dwarf shortcomings, he led the S.A. and its battle standards on violent marches through the communist strongholds of Berlin.¹⁹ He hammered into S.A. that attack was the only sure defense against being overwhelmed by the communists. Gatecrashing a communist rally in Charlottenburg August 25 he demanded permission to speak and, when this was refused, turned 150 of his toughs loose on the audience.²⁰ A few days later Horst Wessel's No. 5 Sturm launched a violent attack on the communist headquarters in Berlin-Kiez, injuring several Reds.²¹ It was open to Goebbels called the Reds 'roaring, raging sub-humans,' and the worst of all—'They scream, they shriek, they bare themselves to us quite shamelessly.' The communists referred to him as 'Goebbels the work-assassin.'²²

Police chief 'Isidor' Weiss too went onto the counter-attack. Gre Strasser, his immunity revoked, was sentenced to six months' jail.²³ September Weiss seized one entire issue of *Angriff*, charging it with incitement to treason. *Angriff* developed an iconoclastic style of its own making fun of people's names and lampooning the Central-Verein, pompous Jewish Central Board which had protested at a spate of Nazi attacks on 'harmless passers-by,' by calling it henceforth the 'Central Board of Harmless Passers-By.'²⁴ To Goebbels' discomfiture, the *Welt* newspaper struck back by printing every truly seditious word he had said

**
No fear
of death
— great
desire for
independence
(since he
did not yet
believe in
the eventual
victory of
Nazis — his
initial
timidity is
this fear of
the Jewish
central board
which would
in power his
independence.*

Nov 17, 1929

(and many he had not), trying to get the party banned again.²⁵ But there was no going back.

His courage, or bravado, was nearly his undoing. One Sunday in September 1929 he took two thousand S.A. marchers into proletarian Neukölln. He expected blood to flow, and it was nearly his own. Standing in his open car he took the salute at Wiener Strasse, then ordered Tonak to drive on and park near the Görlitz station. Here a burly communist called Hans Krause shouted, 'It's Goebbels, the assassin of the workers! Let him have it!' 'Before my very eyes,' recorded Goebbels, 'there appear blackjacks, knives, and knuckle-dusters.... A communist hurls himself at me. A shot rings out.' The shots were answered from his car, a pistol loaded with blanks. His chauffeur was injured yet again. 'I staunch Tonak's bleeding. He accelerates away, bouncing the car off street signs and curbstones. A hail of rocks follows us, and more shots are fired.'²⁶ Tonak got them to a police station, but the police arrested them both for using a firearm. It was seven P.M. before they were released.

The ill-conceived campaign for a referendum on the Young Plan, which would ask voters among others things to approve the incarceration of any minister guilty of 'enslaving' the German people, occupied him throughout that month.²⁷ He wrote privately however that nothing was to be achieved by parliamentary means: 'The revolution must march.'²⁸ By midday on November 2 it was plain that the Nazis and D.N.V.P. combined had collected signatures from more than the requisite ten percent of the electorate, some 4,135,000 names. The government however blocked the referendum and the campaign collapsed.²⁹

Goebbels' next campaign was for the communal elections in Prussia. He ordered every man and implement into the fray. 'Our Doctor,' wrote one, 'was everywhere.'³⁰ He spoke in Berlin and in other cities too. At Weimar he met Anka for five minutes in November; she suddenly kissed him with tears in her eyes.³¹ But these women were now history—he was impressed by the sudden firmness of his own resolve.³²

His HQ was like a warehouse with bales of printed propaganda being moved in and out. Fighting on a shoestring the Nazis could not match their rivals' expenditure, but Goebbels' campaign was not without effect. While in May 1928 thirty-nine thousand Berliners had voted the Nazi ticket, on November 17, 1929, his campaign attracted 132,097 votes—or 5.8 percent of the total. Twice during the night he gleefully phoned Hitler. There would now be twenty-three National Socialist deputies in Prussia, with Goebbels at their head.

'The next task,' he declared the day after the election: 'Our own daily paper.'³³ The problem of financing this leap forward had troubled him all year. *Angriff's* street sales were soaring. He hoped to go daily with it from January 1930. But they would need at least eight thousand new subscribers and massive extra capital. Swallowing his pride he asked Elsbeth Zander to get the Women's Order to raise the forty thousand marks, and five thousand new subscribers too.³⁴ After he addressed a giggling meeting of six hundred women on November 7 they collected

*in protesting him, I don't think the SA had
yet determined how important it was*

*again that was the reason for the SA
it was not - in fact the SA was not*

1929

88 II: THE GAULEITER OF BERLIN

4,500 marks on the spot. Police agents learned that Helene Bechstein had donated five thousand. As another woman, of the old Russ Potempa family, handed over five thousand marks Goebbels could help noticing her pretty twin daughters.³⁵

Party HQ in Munich was unenthusiastic about his publishing plans. His politics were still radically different from Hitler's. For a while Rosenberg talked of bringing out a Berlin edition of his stupendously boring VB, with *Angriff* as a local supplement. But the latter's war chest was expanding. A Mr Heidenreich donated ten thousand marks, 'trustful as he said, 'in our victory.' By early January the Women's Order had amassed twenty-six thousand marks and two thousand new subscriber names.³⁶

THREE days after the November 1929 election Goebbels had travelled down to Munich for planning talks on *Angriff*. After an evening speeches he stayed up talking with Karl Kaufmann, Göring, and Wilhelm Kube, another gauleiter. They shared his view of Hitler's beer-hall militia. Hitler again promised to relinquish control of national propaganda. Goebbels, if he would spend more of his time in Munich. Goebbels was appreciative but critical: 'I am not overlooking his failings,' he wrote privately about Hitler. 'He's too soft and he works too little.' 'I suspect he continued primarily in his diary, 'that he indulges in too much fantasizing too.' Lying awake pondering these failings in his adopted father figure, Goebbels charitably concluded that Hitler was different and that he had a right therefore to be judged on a different scale. 'Hitler's Myth must stand, like a *rocher de bronze*.'³⁷

In Rheydt, he was losing his real father. The Goebbels family doctor pronounced the old man's condition as beyond hope. Ashen and gaunt, his face streaked by tears of pain, his father had lain on a sofa in the spotlessly tidy kitchen when he last saw him at Rheydt, surrounded by his family. ('There we are,' Paul Joseph had soliloquized in his diary, 'the Goebbels family: Of diverse character every one of us, but all of the same blood. Soft as children, and hard as nails.'³⁸) He wrote a long last letter to the pious old man and traveled to Rheydt again. A living skeleton, whimpering with pain, his father asked only that they all pray for him. On December 7 he died. What person does not suffer pangs of remorse upon a parent's death? 'Without his children,' Goebbels reflected, 'all alone, he crossed to the wilderness of Nirvana.'⁴⁰ Tonak chauffeur took the Goebbels brothers up to the church where the body of their father lay surrounded by flickering candles; helpless tears trickling down his cheeks, Joseph stroked the waxy hands and face of the man who would now never know to what heights his own sacrifices had propelled his son.

A letter of condolence came from Anka. 'It will be my endeavor,' she solemnly replied, 'to equal my late father's fanaticism and devotion to the cause, with the difference that his was for his family, whereas mine shall be for my people and fatherland.' 'I should be glad,' he mechanically concluded, 'to hear again from you soon.'⁴¹

Geli
years

1929

In Rheydt he had run into Else Janke. She pinked, turned pale, and asked if he ever thought of her. 'What should I reply?' he reflected, and answered with a lie.

All of these events unsettled him. A week before Christmas he had a grotesque nightmare. He dreamed he was back at school being pursued along echoing corridors by rabbis from eastern Galicia. The Jews were chanting as they ran, screaming *Hate, hate, hate!* He always kept a few limping strides ahead of them, and answered with the same taunt. In his dream it seemed as though the pursuit lasted for hours, but they never caught up with him.⁴²

1929 → 1930

12: Hold the Flag High

WITH only five dead by the end of 1929 Berlin had as yet ^{no} Nazi martyrs.¹ But the war in the streets was intensify^{ing}. Sometimes Goebbels found somebody in the HQ's kitchen being treated for stab injuries; bullet wounds increased.² As he was visiting Edmund Behnke, an S.A. man slowly dying from the original Pharus Rooms brawl, another man was brought in with a slashed forehead.³ On November 4 communists murdered Gerhard Weber; December 14 a communist gunned down Walter Fischer during a raid on an S.A. office. Capitalizing on these martyrs, Goebbels organized larger funerals. At Fischer's he spoke alongside Göring, Prince August Wilhelm, and Horst Wessel.⁴ Spending Christmas with his now widowed mother he heard that their opponents had slit the throat of yet another S.A. man, the bookbinder Fritz Radloff, and New Year's Eve found him at a rainsoaked cemetery burying Radloff too.

No murder really fired the imagination of the party so much as this when his time came, of young Horst Wessel himself. Goebbels considered him one of his most promising apostles, although still only twenty-two.⁵ But he was a marked man. Wessel's No. 5 Sturm 1 angered the communist high command by recruiting freely from their ranks. More recently, according to Stennes, he had fallen in with their company. He dropped out of his law studies and was working as a laborer.⁶ Perhaps this was no more than youthful rebellion—his father had been an evangelical pastor and freemason. Against his mother's wishes he had moved into a sleazy attic room at No. 62 Grosse Frankfurter Strasse with his girlfriend Erna Jänichen, whom he had rescued from the streets.⁷ That December his brother Werner had frozen to death on the mountains; Goebbels buried him with a torchlight parade route provocatively past the communists' Karl Liebknecht building. On evening of January 14 the enemy squared accounts with Horst: a dozen communists and Jews beset his lodgings; the carpenter Albrecht Höhl, Salomon Epstein, and another man raced upstairs and hammered on the door. When Wessel, inside with Erna and another girl, opened up, Höhl shouted "Hands up!" and discharged a nine-millimeter Parabellum pistol into his face, blowing away his jaw. Seizing papers and a gun from Wessel's locked cupboard (his disaffected landlady, widow of a communist, had obliged them with the keys) the attackers escaped; Höhl kicked him prostrate. Wessel as he ran out, yelling, "You know what that's for!" I

193e

HOLD THE FLAG HIGH 91

communist HQ put a well-oiled escape plan into action for Höhler, providing refuges in two Jewish households and then funds and a forged passport to flee to Prague.⁸

Horst Wessel clung to life in the hospital for weeks. Goebbels visited him often; he mused that this was the stuff of a real Dostoyevsky novel—'The Idiot, the Workers, the Harlot, the Bourgeois Family.'⁹

Once Wessel croaked, 'We must go on!'¹⁰

Foolishly returning to Berlin, Höhler was arrested and confessed.¹¹

The aftermath was a textbook example of the brilliant disinformation techniques used by Goebbels' opponents. The defense lawyer hired by the communists, Löwenthal, started a whispering campaign to smear Wessel as Erna's pimp.¹² Thus he could portray Höhler's motives as purely personal. The 'Judenpresse' seized on this tidbit. Communist playwright Bertolt Brecht mocked, 'In the search for a fitting hero who really personified the movement, the National Socialists opted, after considerable deliberation, for a pimp.' Goebbels gritted his teeth and fought back: he now had the one real martyr the movement needed. On February 7 he had the Horst Wessel anthem, 'Hold the Flag High,' sung by massed choirs at the end of a Sport Palace rally. Visiting the hospital he urged the young man not to give up the fight to live, but he died sixteen days later. 'Thou shalt live on with us,' wrote Goebbels mawkishly after visiting the death bed, 'and shalt partake in our victory.'¹³

scenes
of
Horst
Wessel
death.

He ordained a colossal funeral parade for March 1, and Hitler himself promised to attend. Fearing major disturbances Dr Weiss banned it, allowing only ten cars in the cortège and a ceremony confined to the walled Nikolai cemetery itself. Police officers confiscated the flag draping the coffin. Communists, out in force along the route, snatched the wreaths from the horse-drawn hearse and sang the 'Internationale'.¹⁴ At the cemetery Goebbels found a large slogan painted on the wall: 'A FINAL HEIL HITLER TO WESSEL THE PIMP!' He swallowed his fury. As the coffin sank into the ground a thousand throats defiantly roared the anthem that bore its murdered composer's name. In ten years, Goebbels prophesied to the S.A. men parading within the cemetery walls, in one of the finest speeches he ever delivered, that anthem would be sung by every schoolchild, by every factory worker, and by every marching soldier in Germany.¹⁵ A barrage of rocks came flying over the wall from the jeering mob outside. 'They rampage,' recorded Goebbels upon his return home: 'And we win.'¹⁶

HITLER had missed the funeral; he had decided to spend the weekend at his Obersalzberg cottage with Geli instead. Goebbels took this very hard. He felt he had got to know Hitler better, and deprecated his indolent, undependable, indecisive personality.¹⁷ He believed that Göring shared this view. 'He [Hitler] works too little,' wrote Goebbels, 'and then the woman, the women!' How many promises Hitler had now given him and broken: to attend the Horst Wessel funeral; to break with Otto Strasser; to enable Angriff to appear as a daily newspaper; and to appoint him

March 1, 1930

92 II: THE GAULEITER OF BERLIN

Reich propaganda director—these were only some of them.¹⁸

Delayed by obstructionism from Munich Goebbels had failed to upgrade *Angriff* as planned to a daily newspaper in January 1930.¹⁹ That month the Strassers announced that they would publish a daily in Berlin, *National Sozialist*, from March 1. Since it would flaunt the party's swastika emblem it would be a lethal stab in the back for Goebbels. He protested to Hitler.²⁰ Characteristically, Hitler did not even reply. 'He lacks the courage to take decisions,' Goebbels deduced.²¹ Finally Munich phoned, inviting him down to talk it over with Hitler. Goebbels set off determined to threaten resignation.²² Hitler however claimed to know nothing of the Strassers' newspaper plan; he feigned a convincing rage about Otto's 'disloyalty,' a rather smaller rage about his brother Gregor, and, with his beloved Geli at his side, comforted the gauleiter, saying he would publish *VB* in Berlin. 'That puts Strasser up against the wall,' wrote Goebbels maliciously, 'just where he wanted to put me.'²³ He returned to Berlin appeased. In fact, Hitler's subsequent announcement of his plan seemed even to disavow Goebbels.²⁴ There were howls of glee from Berlin's organized Jewish community and particularly from their *Central-Ver Zeitung*.

An open breach with Munich threatened. Hitler had promised to squelch Otto Strasser's plans to publish his daily newspaper; the Strassers continued however to announce it as coming.²⁵ No sooner had Hitler persuaded the *VB* to publish an item on Goebbels' behalf than the Strassers talked their Führer round again.²⁶ Their new daily newspaper hit the streets on March 1, the day of Horst Wessel's funeral. Hitler's capitulation to the Strassers was evidently one reason why he dared not to show his face in Goebbels' city.

Immediately after the ceremony Goebbels phoned him and drafted another letter threatening resignation. He sent Göring down to Bavaria carrying this ultimatum. Hitler offered still more promises to be conveyed back to Goebbels.²⁷ He repeated in particular the offer to make Goebbels Reich propaganda director ('for the umpteenth time!' commented Goebbels sarcastically, learning of this). His faith in Hitler was cooling.²⁸

SEVERAL times his diary carried signs that the Nazis were gaining support in Berlin's regular police force.²⁹ Half of them were former army officers. While Dr Bernhard Weiss seemed secure in office, to Goebbels' delight his political superior Albert Grzesinski was suddenly obliged to resign on the day of the Horst Wessel funeral—because of his marital irregularities. 'That,' Goebbels triumphed, 'is one swine down.'³⁰

He had relied hitherto on his parliamentary immunity to protect himself. On February 11, 1930 the Reichstag took the first steps to revoke his immunity in three cases. 'I'll probably be spending the next years in a clink,' he gloomily reflected.³¹ His benefactress, the dowager Viktoria von Dirksen, asked Prince August-Wilhelm to contact the lawyer Count Rüdiger von der Goltz. Goltz, an imposing figure who had lost a leg in the war, would act for Goebbels, three years his junior, in many of the

March 13, 1930

HOLD THE FLAG HIGH 93

coming court battles. They met over dinner at the Dirksen home in Margarethen Strasse. When Goebbels boasted that his Nazis were willing to die for their ideals, one guest, Baron Freytag von Loringhoven, murmured, 'I am sure some might be prepared to die for the D.N.V.P. cause.'

'Indeed,' mocked Goebbels, 'but only of old age!'³²

The most serious allegation was that of high treason, and on March 10 the Reichstag revoked his immunity on that charge. Meanwhile despite its crippling financial provisions the government passed the Young Plan into law and President von Hindenburg signed it. Anticipating violent opposition, the government revived the hated Law for the Protection of the Republic. Goebbels led the parliamentary protest on March 13.³³ Rounding on Carl Severing, the minister of the interior, he evoked laughter when he recalled that it was Gustav Noske, a predecessor, who had once said, 'Even an ass can rule by state of emergency.'³⁴ And that was precisely what this new law was. 'It is no coincidence,' he shrilled, 'that the Law for the Protection of the Republic is being given its second reading precisely one day after the Young Law is enacted.' 'You yourself point out that in the course of the Young Plan economic hardships are inevitable, and that two or three millions will become permanently unemployed in Germany.' This, he said, revealed the law in its true light—'A law against the unemployed. ... You promised Freedom, Beauty and, Dignity.'

Several times the Speaker reprimanded him. 'Marxism,' declared Goebbels, 'tried before the war to destroy an honest state with dishonest means. We want to get rid of a dishonest state with honest means.'

There were screams of fury. He was ordered to sit down, and the Social Democrats cheered.

The new law was certainly repressive. It was designed to choke even the parliamentary opposition: under it, any prison sentence rendered a person unfit for public office: Dr Weiss's police were empowered to dissolve any political association and to confiscate its entire assets. The crisis however continued, and Dr Heinrich Brüning became chancellor.

Loss of immunity therefore threatened Goebbels with far-reaching consequences. Apart from the old allegation of high treason the files which the police now avidly dusted off concerned a ragbag of misdemeanors, many of them centering on his efforts to puncture Dr Weiss's pride and vanity.³⁵ Weiss was publicly considered the 'uncrowned king' of Berlin, and in Weimar Germany as in many authoritarian states the offense of *lèse-majesté* was taken dreadfully seriously. Worse, on October 20 *Angriff* had referred to the then Prussian minister of the interior as 'Comrade Grzesinski, born in the House of Cohn.' The court summons in this latter case survives in the archives, a cheaply printed form folded into an envelope and stamped 'MOABIT CRIMINAL COURT.'³⁶ More summonses seemed to arrive by every mail—on April 14 he counted nine, including the one alleging high treason. 'A fine show this is going to be,' he wrote in his diary. Several times he simply refused to testify, and the hearings ended with the judge in a deeply satisfying fury.³⁷

1930

94 II: THE GAULEITER OF BERLIN

The most delicate case against Goebbels involved the president's recent article and caricature in *Angriff* had asked 'Is Hindenburg alive?'³⁸ The writ from the Field Marshal disturbed him, and he cursed editorial staff of *Angriff* for saddling him with this case.³⁹ Hindenburg's personal prestige was very great, even though by modern standards journalism the article was quite tame. It had appealed to Hindenburg to invoke his presidential powers to block the ruinous Young Plan:

'But even the remaining personal admirers and friends of Hindenburg the article had said, 'entertain few illusions about any activity to be expected from him in this direction. Here as in every other similar situation Mr von Hindenburg will do whatever his Jewish and market advisers ask of him.'

Goebbels was all for pleading justification (Ritter von Epp had provided him with 'annihilating material' about the field marshal).⁴⁰ Goltz encouraged this. Goebbels drafted his own defense speech and looked forward to the court hearing set down for the last day of May 1930, the eve of the trial however Goltz brought him the unwelcome news that two of the three judges were Jewish. He challenged them right away, but his motion for recusal was denied. 'Then,' he recorded modestly in his diary, 'I speak: ninety minutes and I am in tip-top form. The whole court is deeply impressed. The prosecutor demands nine months' prison. Goltz speaks, very effective.'⁴¹

After a two-hour recess the judges announced their verdict—a trifling fine of eight hundred marks. Their judgment all but exonerated Goebbels, who wrote, 'I could have yelled with joy.' Only the cartoon was considered libelous inasmuch as it portrayed one arm of Hindenburg's presidential throne as a Jewish-nosed, Star-of-David-wearing gargoyle. No longer mentioning that the judges who had served him so fairly were themselves Jewish, Dr Goebbels recorded in his diary only the wonderful propagandistic effect of this 'victory.' The news even made the far-away columns of the *New York Times*.⁴²

⌞ Lunching during the long recess with Hermann Göring, and noticing that the aviator was by no means comfortable with Goebbels' attack on the old warrior. His attitude to Göring was now one of scorn tinged with envy. Relying on his war record Göring had established himself firmly in Berlin's society; still lacking home comforts of his own, Goebbels often spent his evenings with Hermann and Karin and one or other of the Nazi princes.⁴³ His own principles had begun to fray from exposure to the corrupt, blue-blood-loving Göring. He must have realized that Göring could only finance his lifestyle with hefty bribes from the aviation industry, precisely the kind of behavior that Goebbels thundered against when detected in Jews like the financiers Max Sklarek or Julius Barmat. March Göring grandly offered to procure a new car for Goebbels; the offer proved as empty as the apartment he had promised earlier.⁴⁴

When Easter came in 1930 Göring invited him along to visit his Swedish in-laws. They made a memorable couple—the swaggering

aviator and the diminutive figure limping at his side. It was Dr Goebbels' first trip overseas. Every time he awoke the train seemed to be passing a boulder strewn landscape. The Swedes themselves made up for it. He lusted greedily after the statuesque blonde women, and concluded that they were superior to their menfolk. The Swedish men were doormats, from their monarch downward, 'German on the outside,' he wrote, 'half-Jews within.'⁴⁵ When he left the Görings he decided that Carin was 'on the verge of' tears and added, using his coded doublespeak, 'She is fond of me' (meaning, he was of her); and more meaningfully, 'I revere her like a mother.' Hermann Göring, he decided, was a good sport.⁴⁶

Hitler's birthday came during the absence. Goebbels did not write his customary eulogy. He was still aggrieved about the Strassers. By mid-March sales of the Strassers' new daily *National Sozialist* in Berlin were soaring, and both *Angriff* and *Völkischer Beobachter* were in difficulties. Reluctant to carry out his threat of resigning, Goebbels wrote: 'Munich, and that includes the chief, have run out of credit with me.' He added, 'Hitler hides away, he takes no decisions. . . . He just lets things drift.'⁴⁷ His office manager Franz Wilke returned from Munich with more empty Hitler promises.⁴⁸ Himmeler came and assured Goebbels that Hitler really wanted him as Reich propaganda director. Goebbels had heard that before.⁴⁹ He had brooded for months on Hitler and his broken promises. 'He doesn't dare make a move against Strasser,' he noted. 'What's going to happen later when he has to act the dictator in Germany?'⁵⁰ When Hitler suddenly surfaced in Berlin for a conference with Hugenberg and the D.N.V.P. on ways of bringing the government crisis to a head, Goebbels tackled him, taking along Göring for moral support. He frankly accused the Führer of letting things drift. A second meeting with Hitler left Goebbels with the impression that he was losing his nerve. In the event, Hugenberg's party refused to join Hitler in forcing a vote of confidence.⁵¹

The government's crisis peaked on April 12. Brüning just survived, his majority reduced to seven. On April 14, his majority slumped still further to three; but again he survived. Hitler, who had hurried to Berlin, returned to Munich. None of their opponents wanted an election from which only the Nazis and communists were likely to profit.

As the depression bit deeper Hitler's party had begun to expand. It ended 1930 with 389,000 registered members. Dr Goebbels doubled his gau's membership, although the wealthier districts were still sparsely represented: the huge West End Ortsgruppe (local) extending from Schloss Strasse to Pichelsdorf and from the grimy Siemensstadt industrial suburb to Halensee still yielded only forty-five members.

Late in April 1930 Goebbels learned while in Munich that Hitler had at last reprimanded Gregor Strasser. The Führer confirmed that he had issued an ultimatum to Strasser to drop either his newspaper in Berlin or the Organization Department in Munich. Since everybody now had their eyes on Reichstag seats, Hitler had regained his influence. 'Thank

1930

goodness,' wrote Goebbels. 'Everybody is right behind him. Strasser sits there like guilt personified. Hitler has strung him up—courteous the last rung of the scaffold.' Then came the moment that Goebbels had badgered for. Hitler announced—'amid,' if Goebbels is to be believed 'a breathless hush'—his appointment as the party's national chief propaganda.⁵² With it went the rank of Reichsleiter, making him one a very select body indeed. Goebbels saw Strasser go pale. Afterward, a whole bunch except for Himmler came round to Goebbels' side.

The Berlin gau HQ now had about thirty on its payroll, including Muchow, who was in charge of perfecting the factory cell-system. Goebbels had twice been able to raise their pay.⁵³ He began looking round larger premises, perhaps even an entire building.⁵⁴ Cleverly mollifying him, the party's national HQ purchased for him a brand new or Mercedes with a supercharged engine. He was still a big-car enthusiast like all the top Nazis.⁵⁵

His own modest budget was quite strained. His brother Konrad's business had folded, leaving Hans and Joseph as providers for the mother. 'I want to look after Mother as best I can,' wrote Goebbels. 'Good old Mum, she deserves an old age free of worries.'⁵⁶ The glittering Mercedes soaked up his income, however. It was an essential motif display of might and rank, with some of the attributes of a tank as well. One night after his S.A. men had killed three communists he was driven with six Brownshirts to a parade when he was recognized by his enemies. 'My heart missed a beat,' he recorded, 'but our magnificent Supercharged, rampaged triumphantly through the howling mob.'⁵⁷

His disenchantment with his Führer continued. Horst Wessel's mother complained that Hitler had not written even one line of sympathy. Privately Goebbels blamed Hitler's waywardness on his 'womanizing.'⁵⁸ Ten days after the new Mercedes arrived, Hitler came back to Berlin to speak at the Sport Palace. He again brought his young niece Geli. Goebbels again pleaded with him to kill off the rival newspaper *National Sozialist*. From the Berlin gauleiter's new offices Hitler phoned Otto Strasser a forbade him to sell the newspaper that evening.⁵⁹ But Otto proved more slippery than that. True, he undertook to sell off the newspaper to Hitler's publisher Max Amann and to cease publication from the twentieth; but he broke both promises. On May 21 Hitler returned to Berlin for showdown. This time even Gregor disowned his brother Otto. Hitler threatened open war against them.⁶⁰

Goebbels returned to the fold. In Munich Hitler enthusiastically showed him his plans for the Brown House, the party's new national home. It seemed rather over-opulent even to Goebbels.⁶¹

WHEREAS the departed Social Democratic chancellor Heinrich Müller unlovingly described by Goebbels as having 'a badly rusted voice well oiled by slime'—had ruled by the truncheon, Brüning's two years office would be marked by emergency laws and prohibitions. On April Hanover banned the activities of the Hitler Youth. On June 5 Bava

* The
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is worried
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Goebbels
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June 21, 1930

HOLD THE FLAG HIGH 97

banned political uniforms—in theory those of all parties, in practice only of the Nazis. On June 11, as Goebbels had anticipated, Prussia's new minister of the interior Dr Heinrich Waentig banned the S.A.'s brown shirts, and two weeks later Prussia forbade its civil servants to join the Hitler party. Attired in white shirts with beer-bottle rings as badges, one thousand of Stennes' S.A. men marched through Charlottenburg that evening and Friedrichshain two days later. The police had to adopt ludicrous tactics to enforce the bans.⁶² Goebbels no longer feared them. He had their measure. 'The real enemy,' he recognized, 'is at our rear'—meaning the Strasser faction.⁶³

The Strassers' newspaper continued to appear, spiced with cruel remarks about Goebbels and his cult of personality. Several section heads (Kreisleiter) declared for Otto Strasser. Goebbels blamed Hitler and his procrastination, and meeting him in Leipzig he told him so. Hitler again promised to take action.⁶⁴ Sick with worry, Goebbels wrote: 'Hitler's got to act—he's got to. Or there'll be a catastrophe.' He found out which of his men were traitors, and lodged complaints with the Party's powerful arbitration committee, particularly about Eugen Mossakowsky, editor of the *N.S. Pressekonferenz* and two section heads. Mossakowsky had done something unforgivable: at gauleiter conferences in Berlin and Brandenburg he had accused Goebbels of lying about his heroism during the Ruhr struggle and of forging documents to make his entry into the party seem earlier than it was. These were sore points for Goebbels. Hitler told Göring that he would authorize the Strassers' expulsion on Monday the twenty-third, and personally confirmed this to Goebbels while electioneering at Plauen in Saxony on June 21.⁶⁵

Again however he did not act. When Goebbels phoned him he said he preferred to wait. 'Typical Hitler,' wrote Goebbels. 'Rampant at Plauen, and procrastinating here.'⁶⁶ With Hitler's permission however he expelled the mutinous small fry like Mossakowsky. Mossakowsky pre-empted his expulsion by issuing a statement through the wire services repeating all the lies, and several cruel truths, about Goebbels before resigning.⁶⁷

Gregor Strasser saw the storm signals and assured Goebbels he had broken with his brother Otto. Goebbels trusted none of them. 'If only we had acted in February!' he wailed. The entropy inside his organization increased. There were disturbing reports from Neukölln of scuffles between rival S.A. fractions. Hitler ('the familiar old Hitler... the eternal procrastinator!') kept a low profile. Göring told Goebbels that he too was shattered by Hitler's disloyalty. But the very next day, June 30, he phoned Goebbels: victory was theirs. Hitler had now written a powerful open letter excoriating both Strasser brothers. Gregor laid down the editorship of his newspaper and survived; Otto was expelled from the party. As Hitler's bluntly phrased letter was read out at a Berlin party meeting there were shouts from the floor of 'String 'em up!' Three disgruntled *Angriff* employees left the hall, but that was all. The meeting ended with a spectacular vote of confidence in Hitler and Goebbels. Goebbels

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98 II: THE GAULEITER OF BERLIN

June 30,
1930

persuaded the Führer to decree that Kampf Verlag was an enemy of party. With that, Otto Strasser's goose was cooked.⁶⁸

ONE problem which remained for Dr Goebbels that summer was the courts. Dr Weiss was determined to see him serve his two months in jail. On May 13 the prosecutors confidentially asked the Reichstag if it would still formally in session.⁶⁹ On Goltz's advice Goebbels persuaded Leonardo Conti, the gau's medical officer, to sign a sick note. *That* would give him four weeks' grace. The prosecutor's office demanded independent examination. The mailman brought to Goebbels' Wittenbergische Strasse lodgings a new summons, for libeling Albert Grzinski (by calling him 'Cohn'); it was returned to the courthouse with note, 'Gone away,' and 'no forwarding requested.'⁷⁰

His relations with women have come to a similar impasse. Visit Anka in January 1930 he has failed to detect that she is four months pregnant by yet another man. Returning to Weimar in June he checked into the Elephant hotel and sends her tulips and a card. 'Can I round?' it reads.⁷¹ A half-cocked but still platonic episode begins in July when Lucie Kammer, a young shorthand secretary ('still a pure child with a much older, unloved, and now mortally ill husband comes to gauleiter with her marital problems; he rapidly grasps that she lo him.⁷² A few days later he decides that Princess zu Wied loves him too. At the Görings he meets the Baroness Erika von Paleske and records to 'Ika' (because there is already another Erika in his ménage) also lo him. His phone jangles all day—Charlotte, Xenia, Lucie—'Always same,' he whimpers in his diary. 'I am a victim.' Women are a plague upon him. 'But they are an incredible stimulation to work,' he confesses. What he fears is losing his liberty. He writes about Ika that August, 'She comes on too strong. ... Thank goodness we were sitting out in the open.'⁷³

July 18,
1930

He is vacationing—or hiding—at Erika's house in the forest when word comes on July 18, 1930 that Brüning's government is in difficulties. Torvald rushes him back to the Reichstag building in the Mercedes Supercharged. Goebbels romanticizes that his one vote may seal Brüning's fate. In fact Brüning dissolves the Reichstag. As the communist deputies roar 'Internationale,' Goebbels slips out of the building, naked to the loins, even his residual parliamentary immunity annulled.

Sept 14, 1933

13: His Week in Court

SO FAR Dr Goebbels had had to face no real challenge as gauleiter. But, as the new Reichstag election of September 14, 1930 approached, the rift between his gau's officers and the impoverished and disgruntled fistfighters of the Berlin S.A. came to a head. Most of the S.A. men were unemployed. They saw no signs that Hitler intended to allow them any tangible reward for their bravery. Battered and bruised, they watched bitterly as the party squandered considerable sums on the Brown House, its national HQ, in Munich.¹ Recognizing this, Hitler had ordered the gauleiters to enforce a twenty-pfennig monthly levy on each party member to support their local S.A. men; Goebbels sympathized with them. He ordered an additional ten-pfennig levy in Berlin—the S.A. *Groschen* as it was known.² 'We shall reach our goals only on the basis of the S.A.,' he asserted at one confidential meeting.³

The S.A. however wanted to get at the pork-barrel now, and they were not prepared to wait. The result would be the first full-scale S.A. mutiny, during the heat of the summer in Berlin.

Captain Walter Stennes, the ex-army officer who as supreme S.A. commander (*Ost*) 'Ost' commanded twenty-five thousand of these disaffected men east of the river Elbe, shared many of Dr Goebbels' political views. He had dubbed the gauleiter the Nazis' Joseph Stalin, responsible for preserving the purity of the movement's ideals.⁴ Both deprecated Hitler's legalistic approach to power. Though not as radically left-wing as the gauleiter, Stennes was like him an activist and revolutionary.

Goebbels was torn between instinct and logic. Captain Stennes and the S.A. represented manpower and muscle—but Hitler and Munich held promise of power, office, and ever bigger automobiles. Late in July Hitler called a secret conference to decide the official list of Nazi candidates. Goebbels was amused to see how tame Strasser and the other fractious big-shots suddenly became. They finally agreed a list of one hundred names (though not in their wildest dreams did they expect to win so many seats).⁵

The list brought the problems with the S.A. to a head. Stennes sent to the national supreme S.A. commander, Franz von Pfeffer, a letter asking for safe Reichstag seats for three S.A. men.⁶ But Hitler was opposed to allowing the S.A. any more political clout than it already had. On August 1 Stennes mentioned in his diary reports from his subordinate commanders that relations between the S.A. and Munich were becoming intolerable.

Aug 1930.

100 II: THE GAULEITER OF BERLIN

He invited his boss, Pfeffer, to Berlin at once. Meanwhile on the scene his S.A. commanders reiterated their demands for Reichstag seats. The next day Pfeffer revealed that Hitler was on the contrary talking of cutting the S.A. back to what they could afford.

Financial prudence did not commend itself to the Brownshirt redneck. 'This shows,' reported Stennes' chief of staff, 'that the objectives of the Reich director [i.e. Pfeffer in Munich] are no longer those of old.' That was true. Hitler intended to attain power by strictly legal means. Munich Goebbels, now Reich propaganda director, briefed his deputy Himmeler on the broad outlines of the election campaign, then returned to Berlin. Nationwide over the next two months the glaring red and black Nazi election posters would invade telegraph poles, billboards, and newspapers.⁷ He printed millions of leaflets to be sold to Nazis at one pfennig each. Sleepless with work and worry, his nerves tautened, frayed and snapped. At the beginning of August 1930 one thousand of officials—so rapidly was the party now expanding—packed into a party election conference. From tram conductor to princess, every rank and society was active in the party's campaign.⁸ In this election battle Goebbels would organize twenty thousand meetings up and down the country. In Berlin he would stage twenty-four mass meetings on the last two days alone.

The ruling Social Democrats tried to bury Goebbels with court action. The Hindenburg case was revived along with the ancient charges of high treason. Seven more summonses arrived, accusing Goebbels of having libeled the Prussian prime minister Dr Otto Braun,⁹ Albert Grzesinski, municipal officials, and the entire Jewish community.¹⁰ Fearing summary imprisonment he stockpiled a batch of articles for *Angriff*; on August he was notified of ten more court dates ('with the gentlemen of *Ang* to blame for most of them').¹¹

While the S.A. built up an ugly steam-head in his rear, Goebbels was fighting a nationwide election campaign and preparing half a dozen new defenses. Thus the S.A. could hardly have chosen a less propitious moment to strike. Stennes, a sheaf of resignation letters from his commanders in his pocket, wrote to Pfeffer that his S.A. had a right to hear from Hitler. He got no reply. He then tackled Goebbels and threatened to withdraw his S.A. commanders—the Berlin S.A. would then shrink from fifteen thousand to perhaps three thousand, he predicted. Goebbels exploded; Hitler described the S.A.'s actions to Pfeffer as 'mutiny and conspiracy.' Believing that Stennes' clumsy intrigues were at the bottom of the S.A.'s unrest, Goebbels tackled the top S.A. commanders in Berlin like Bruno Wetzel; he too spoke of mutiny and comfortable in the knowledge that he had Hitler behind him.¹² A few days later Stennes took an S.A. delegation down to Munich, where he demanded to see Hitler. For two days they waited in the lobby. Local S.S. men barred the way. Goebbels, worried, discussed the gathering crisis with Göring. 'I don't trust Stennes at all,' he warned his diary. 'let's keep an eye on him!'¹³

Pre-
Reichstag



III: The Reich Minister

Aug 14, 1930

HIS WEEK IN COURT 101

HIS week in court arrived on Tuesday August 12, beginning with the Otto Braun libel action in Hanover. The Hindenburg appeal was set down for Thursday in Berlin.¹⁴ President Hindenburg let it be known that he would drop the case if they could agree on a joint statement; they could not.

On the twelfth he and his lawyer Goltz took the morning train to Hanover. An eager crowd of Nazis met them at the station along with the local gauleiter Bernhard Rust and his S.A. commander Viktor Lutze, one of the few who were refusing to truckle to Stennes. The rowdy procession swept the one-legged Goltz and his lame client along to the courthouse. The charge was that Goebbels had accused Braun of taking bribes from 'Galician spivs.' Three police agents swore on oath that he had said this; supported by witnesses, Goebbels admitted having accused *Bauer*, the former Social Democrat Reich chancellor, of taking bribes. The prosecutor demanded nine months' prison, arguing that if Goebbels had libeled Hindenburg he was quite capable of having libeled the prime minister. Goltz pointed out that even the Jewish arch-swindler Julius Barmat had been sentenced to only eleven months, with half remitted. Goebbels was acquitted and awarded his costs. Instead of a jail term he had won huge publicity. Burly S.A. men chaired him out of the courtroom, singing the Horst Wessel anthem; he went off to carouse with Lutze, their commander.¹⁵

One down, three to go. On Thursday the fourteenth the court heard his appeal in the Hindenburg case. The prosecutor again demanded a nine-month prison sentence. Goltz however read out a letter from Hindenburg—the president himself wanted to withdraw the original complaint. As that was not possible, he now considered the matter closed and had 'no interest' in punishing Dr Goebbels.¹⁶ The public prosecutor snapped that he, and not Hindenburg, represented the state in this courtroom. The judge disagreed; he too acquitted Dr Goebbels, finding that his statements had been made in the public interest. Goebbels could see that the newspapermen were stunned by this renewed victory.¹⁷

Still a free man he prepared for the third day in the courthouse at Moabit on Friday the fifteenth. The plaintiffs here were the Reich government and ex-chancellor Hermann Müller, charging that in *Angriff* in December 1929 he had labeled the Social Democrats a bunch of hired traitors. The elderly judge Dr Toelke invited him to justify the words, and Goebbels did so with relish, emphasizing how the Social Democrats had signed away Germany's birthright in the postwar treaties while deceiving their own people. Goltz told of how the Social Democrat governments of Saxony, Thuringia, and Prussia had sabotaged the government's postwar struggle for the Ruhr, how Saxony's prime minister had betrayed government secrets to France, how the Social Democrats had thwarted attempts to rescue Schiageter from execution, and how their Philipp Scheidemann had betrayed details of the Reichswehr's violations of Versailles.

Judge Toelke was agnostic. 'If we are to hear *evidence* for all these claims,'

14.

1930

102 II: THE GAULEITER OF BERLIN

he stammered, '—well, I have two months from nine A.M. to six P but—'

'Dr Goebbels,' interrupted Goltz, 'has stated openly what milli think. He wants to justify his allegations. He is at the court's disposal. *We have the time!*'

Goebbels had already brought a platoon of military witnesses to court, but the judge refused to allow them. Goltz solemnly picked up crutch and hobbled out. The prosecutor asked for a six-month sentence on Goebbels. The court reserved its judgment, and moved on without break to the Grzesinski libel action.¹⁸

That Saturday, August 16, Goebbels expected to go to prison. Instead the court stipulated modest fines of six hundred and four hundred marks for libeling the government and Müller, and four hundred for Grzesinski. This was cheap publicity indeed.

'These demanding court actions are doing my gut no good,' wrote Goebbels. 'It's enough to throw up.'

Three down: the court moved on to the next charge, of incitement to violence, and handed down another petty fine, of three hundred marks. 'Let them give their verdict,' wrote Goebbels grimly on the seventeenth. 'We shall utter our verdict on September 14—election day.'

He visited his mother at Rheydt. Berlin phoned him there—four more court summonses had arrived. By the time of his return the number had doubled to eight. Braun and Grzesinski had both appealed for their sentences; Goebbels was now also accused of having, in a speech in Prerow in July 1929, called the Reich's war standard 'a Jewish flag, a rag,' and any republic that it stood for a 'Jew republic.'¹⁹ He decided to ignore these fresh trials. Court officials demanded to see him. He refused—he was now planning the biggest Sport Palace meeting of the campaign. 'The courts,' he recorded, 'are now hounding me with summonses. I've got a thick skin. I won't budge.'²⁰

By the late summer of 1930 there were signs that his diaries had been concealing his true anxiety about the S.A. The incriminating notebooks might have been snatched at any time by communists, the S or the police. Thus the diary avowed that he shared the S.A.'s inclination. In reality he got his office manager Franz Wilke to take precautions against them. This became more urgent as rumors multiplied that Stennes was planning to issue an ultimatum to Munich. Leonardo Conti, the S.A.'s chief physician, warned both Hitler and Goebbels that Stennes was up to no good.²¹ At the end of August, realizing that he could not curb his underlings' revolutionary passions, Pfeffer resigned.²²

Stennes waited until Goebbels was away in Dresden, then called the commanders together. Melitta Wiedemann, features editor of *Ang*, could see him through the windows one floor below standing in a white cap at the head of a table round which crowded Berlin's S.A. commanders. There were growls of approval as Stennes proposed they go

strike immediately unless Hitler accepted their demands for a bigger slice of the action.²³

By telephone Goebbels heard from Berlin that the S.A. commanders had collected their ragged regiments (*Standarten*) for a confrontation with both Berlin (Goebbels) and Munich (Hitler). This put at risk the big Sport Palace election meeting on Friday the twenty-ninth. Back in Berlin on Thursday Goebbels found Stennes demanding three Reichstag seats and more funds. Otherwise, in best trades-union jargon, he could not guarantee that his S.A. lads would not break up Goebbels' meeting, an 'unparalleled impertinence' in the gauleiter's view.

It was an ugly situation. Goebbels phoned Munich and advised them to play for time. They could *appear* to yield to Stennes' demands, fight the election, then take revenge on him. Hitler however said he did not propose to yield anything. Goebbels swooned with rage: Hitler had lost touch with reality—fifteen thousand S.A. in Berlin were threatening violence against him and his embattled HQ. He left for Hamburg that evening. In his absence thirty S.A. men appeared at the Hedemann Strasse HQ with the intention of giving Franz Wilke the kind of head massage in which they specialized. Only the intervention of Stennes himself, according to his diary, prevented a rough-house. 'The S.A. commanders,' he dictated, 'left no doubt that, far from protecting today's Sport Palace meeting of General [Karl] Litzmann, Dr [Wilhelm] Frick, and Dr Goebbels, the S.A. men of the Gau Sturm intended to smash it up.' Stennes ordered them to assemble in a beerhall at Hasenheide instead, to receive special orders from him (which his diary does not specify).

Wilke reacted by moving a reliable S.S. guard unit into the HQ building. Goebbels discreetly left by car the next morning, Saturday the thirtieth, for Breslau. Stennes ordered his commanders to meet him at Hedemann Strasse. As they were meeting here, they found an S.S. man, Hertel, writing notes on their conference from the locked room next door, 'on orders from above.'²⁴ An S.A. unit bloodily evicted the S.S. men, though not before one of them, Walter Kern, had alerted the police.²⁵ Dr Bernhard Weiss sent a massive force round within minutes, who hauled off the S.A. trespassers.

An urgent telegram notified Goebbels in Breslau. He phoned Hitler at Bayreuth; Hitler said he would come to Berlin at once.²⁶ Back in the capital Goebbels found his HQ a shambles. There were bloodstains everywhere. Unshaven and baggy-eyed, Hitler, Himmler, and Hess reached Berlin around eleven A.M. and checked into an hotel near Potsdamer Platz.²⁷ Hitler asked Wilke for a full report, then toured the city's S.A. units to test morale.²⁸ He was jeered at some locations. That evening he invited the lesser commanders, and then Berlin's S.A. Oberführer Wetzell, to meet him in Goebbels' apartment. Hitler, Goebbels, Göring, and Himmler were present, but not Stennes. 'The Berlin S.A. commanders,' recalled Himmler, 'trooped into Dr Goebbels' apartment that afternoon and acted in an incredibly rowdy manner toward the Führer.

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1930

Gangs of S.A. men were chorusing slogans outside in the street. Stennes had probably staged the whole thing.' For two hours they banded allegations and counter-allegations. Rudolf Hess mentioned the odd that Stennes had a gun permit issued by the head of the political police, Wündisch, and implied that he was a police agent (a belief which Goebbels came to share).²⁹ Hitler ruled that Stennes would have to go. In the middle of the night however a Herculean figure, Richard Harwa, probably the toughest man in the Berlin Sturmabteilung (S.A.), came clattering upstairs into Goebbels' apartment, flung a salute, and roared: 'Adolf, don't get tough with your own S.A.!'³⁰

Urged by Harwardt to give Stennes himself a hearing, Hitler reluctantly agreed. It lasted until six a.m., when Hitler sent for all the S.A. commanders once more and declared that he was going to cut their Berlin army rigorously in size.

This was getting nowhere. Goebbels left to snatch an hour's sleep—he had to be in court for yet another libel action that morning (he refused to offer any defense, was sentenced to prison, appealed).³¹ Exhausted and almost asleep on his feet he pleaded with Hitler once again to promise the S.A. whatever they demanded.³² Winning the election must occur first.

It was now Monday September 1. According to Goebbels' diary four P.M. Hitler took the decision he had urged: Stennes should stay; he would dismiss Pfeffer as supreme commander, despite his resignation and take over the S.A. himself (with the notorious Ernst Röhm as chief of staff).³³ A letter went to Stennes, and Stennes pledged loyalty. Taking selected S.S. men as an escort, Hitler spoke in the Veterans' Building to 'his' entire Berlin S.A., promising to meet Stennes' fundamental demands. Police observers reported that Hitler, his voice cracked with emotion, appealed for unswerving loyalty: 'Let us pray in this hour that nothing can divide us, and that God will help us against the Devil!' screamed Hitler. 'Almighty Lord, bless our fight!'—and the roars of Heil, so the police reported, had died away as the audience noticed their Führer's hands folded seemingly in prayer.³⁴ The Görings threw a little receipt at Badensche Strasse afterwards. Stennes was not invited. The whole reconciliation had been a charade, as Goebbels had recommended to Hitler. This became plain from remarks made by the top Nazis at the reception.³⁵ 'Everything shipshape,' wrote Goebbels later that day. 'The end of the Stennes putsch.'³⁶ They would, he added, be drawing necessary conclusions after the election. The campaign resumed.

GERMANY had never seen a battle like this. Over the last two weeks the Nazis staged hundreds of dramatic meetings—in the open air, in the city by night, in marquees, by torchlight. Goebbels willingly spoke side by side with Gregor Strasser.³⁷ His HQ printed tens of millions of leaflets. The streets were carpeted with them. Sixty truckloads of Nazis came around the capital tossing out pamphlets; Goebbels clambered from truck to truck, haranguing pedestrians through an amplifier and whip-

Sept 1

*

Yes, Hitler was sensitive. The situation was indeed debatable whether to support him.

1930

on his men. The posters clearly betrayed his own handiwork. One contrasted unlovely photographs of all their thick-lensed oppressors—pride of place being given to Dr Weiss—with majestic studio portraits of the top eleven Nazis. As for his own likeness, Goebbels placed this right next to Hitler's.³⁸

Unemployment had been two million as the year opened. It would reach 4,380,000 as the year ended. 'Out with this rabble!' cried Goebbels in *Angriff*. He hoped for a quarter of a million Nazi voters in Berlin. When Hitler came to the Sport Palace on September 10, one hundred thousand people applied for tickets. The photos show him with clenched fists raised, orating into a box microphone some three feet in front of him (in Hermann Schäfer, Goebbels had now gained one of Europe's finest public-address system technicians).³⁹ 'With fanaticism like this,' wrote Goebbels afterward, 'a nation can and will rouse itself again.' He attributed the public curiosity to the S.A. mutiny. 'The S.A. must give up all political ambitions,' he wrote after discussing the problem over supper with Hitler and Göring (now the party's liaison to the S.A.).⁴⁰ All three—Hitler, Goebbels, and Stennes—were to be seen amiably sharing a meal the next day.⁴¹ On the final electioneering day, the twelfth, the little gauleiter spoke at seven meetings—motoring in his Mercedes Super-charger from hall to hall, flanked by motorcycle outriders.

Sept

'Keep calm!' he admonished himself. He had rented the Sport Palace for election night itself, September 14, 1930. By mid-evening the cavernous hall was rocking with cheers as the first results came in. Hitler had banked on winning fifty seats, or eighty at most. As midnight approached, the Nazis had already won 103.⁴² Exultant young men jogged around the hall with Goebbels on their shoulders. The final tally was 6,406,397 votes, entitling the Nazis to 107 seats. Suddenly the Nazis were the strongest party in Germany after the Social Democrats. This was democracy with a vengeance. The communists however had also increased their share, from 10.6 to 13.1 percent. (In Berlin the Nazis, with over 360,000 votes, had won 12.8 percent of the vote.) 'Hot months lie ahead,' predicted Goebbels. 'The communists have gained too.'⁴³

HE is in grave danger of arrest. A month will pass before the Reichstag convenes and he is immune again.

He needs to empty his fevered brain, and for this purpose female company is ideal. He flirts with Xenia ('the best of all'), he escorts Carin Göring, he accompanies the delightful Potempa twins, or phones Charlotte, and he gets to know not only the Weimar architect Professor Paul Schultze-Naumburg but his lovely wife as well, and decides as often as he needs to that they are all madly in love with him.⁴⁴

Horried by the Nazis' election victories, Dr Weiss's police show him no mercy. Five days after the election baton-wielding police fling Goebbels down the steps of a police station as he protests at their treatment of an S.A. man brought in for questioning.⁴⁵ The courts set down five new cases for—surely no coincidence—Monday October 13,

Oct 1

Oct 13, (930

106 II: THE GAULEITER OF BERLIN

the very afternoon that the Reichstag is due to swear him in. The police are ordered to bring him in by force if need be. He takes refuge on Erika's forest cottage, armed with a dispensation from his doctor. He hunkers down in the back of the Potempas' car to go to Weimar where Hitler speaks in the National Theater, with Göring following as a somewhat implausible decoy in the Supercharger. 'What wizard fellows the fliers are!' enthuses Goebbels, changing his mind yet again.

He drives back from Thuringia that Sunday night in the Schul Naumburgs' car, squeezed enjoyably between the professor's comely and her stepdaughter Babette; he sleeps at the Schultze-Naumburgs' it is just as well, for Dr Weiss's police are meanwhile ransacking lodgings in Württembergische Strasse and lying in wait for him.

Oct 13. October 13 comes. He lies doggo all morning writing up his diary: 'three hours I am immune again, thank God!' As Berlin's Nazis go on orgy of destruction through the West End, smashing the window Jewish-owned stores on the Potsdamer Platz and in Kurfürstendamm, an inspired move by the gauleiter to distract 'Isidor'—he is driven breakneck speed over to the Reichstag.

'Portal zwei!' he shouts. Plainclothes detectives see him hobbling fitfully up the long flight of steps to Door Two, wearing a light raincoat buttoned tightly to his neck, and grab at him just as he lurches through the great doors. The gau official Hanno Konopatz and a Reichstag flu get a firm grip on him and bundle him inside.⁴⁶

They have torn off his coat. Beneath it for the first time he is wearing the forbidden uniform of the Nazi party. He is once more immune, he can do and say as he likes.

1930

14: A Blonde in the Archives

AFTER all the other deputies had taken their seats the Nazis marched in. Like Dr Goebbels, all were wearing the forbidden brown shirt. A cacophony of insults greeted them. Five days later Chancellor Brüning set out his economic program. To packed benches the bullheaded, broadshouldered Gregor Strasser delivered one of the best speeches of his life. Even Goebbels was impressed. 'The House pays the closest attention,' he wrote with more than a soupçon of envy. 'Thus he's back again, firmly in the saddle.'¹ The Nazis called repeatedly for votes of no confidence in Brüning. The Reichstag was then adjourned until early December.

Goebbels was bored with it already. The fight had been the fun. 'The toxic haze of parliaments is not the right air for me,' he decided. 'I can't breathe there.' Back at his lodgings he revived himself with whiffs of the Lieder of Brahms and Wolff, to which he provided his own piano accompaniment.²

from paper With the political wind in Germany now beginning to blow Brown, the highest police officials faced an ugly option: to smash the Nazis or to join them. The first alternative entailed facing the risk that the Nazis would gain power. Increasingly the middle-ranking officers decided that Germany's future lay with Goebbels and Hitler. According to Berlin's *Acht-Uhr Abendblatt* at least one senior police officer had been seen cheering the Nazis on during the riots of October 13, 1930 and singing a Nazi song. Albert Grzesinski wrote to Prussia's prime minister Braun that evening, protesting against this 'deliberate' breakdown of police authority.³ 'In grave times like these,' he wrote, 'what counts is being tough—tough as nails.' If Schutzpolizei commander Heimannsberg himself proved guilty then he too must go. 'If,' wrote Grzesinski, getting to his real point, 'Comrade Zörgiebel [Berlin's police president] stands up for both these officers, we must not spare him either.' Braun agreed; he dismissed Waentig as minister of the interior as well as Zörgiebel, appointing Grzesinski in the latter's place. 'It's going to be some winter,' commented a wry Goebbels in his diary. 'But if these bastards think they can get us down with terror and persecution they've got another think coming.'⁴

The mood at Alexander Platz, the brownstone police HQ in Berlin, was jubilant. Dr Weiss personally welcomed back his fellow socialist Grzesinski at a little police ceremony. 'When we heard it was you,' said

1930

108 II: THE GAULEITER OF BERLIN

the oily Dr Weiss, the real power behind the scenes, 'we all cheered.'⁵

He had turned thirty-three. That month he recorded his first radio broadcast, debating international art with the renowned left-wing stage director Erwin Piscator. A new friend, Arnolt Bronnen, arranged by this interview and another two days later on neutrality in broadcast and the cowardice of governments.⁶ Fritz Prang, his old schoolfriend had given him a splendid radio and he sat up late marveling at the sound coming from Rome or Copenhagen. Preferring the aristocracy to cash his bags for him, he had taken on the upright young Count Karl-Hub Schimmelmann as his private secretary.⁷

His party HQ in Hedemann Strasse was turning into a fortress. From the reception area one door to the right led to the quarters of increasingly ill-humored S.A., the other to the left to his gau headquarters. Uniformed men stood guard on each door. Visitors were taken through a locked and guarded doorway at the end of a short passage past a long suite of rooms separated by shoulder-high glass partitions, a side chamber off which more locked doors concealed three large rooms, in the very last of these sat the gauleiter, Dr Goebbels, in an otherwise empty room at a desk a full ten yards from the door. He could reach the room via a side staircase directly from the yard door where his new Mercedes delivered him each day.

Nov 1.

He installed the editorial offices of *Angriff* on the first floor of the building. From November 1, 1930 it appeared as a daily. Its masthead now read, 'Berlin's German evening paper.' Months of weary negotiations with Max Amann had preceded this innovation. Goebbels mistrusted the party's publisher, but in September a deal had been worked out giving Franz Eher Verlag 60 percent of the stock in *Ang* and the gau 40 percent. Goebbels retained editorial control.⁸ The rotary presses had been assembled at the printers, Süsserott & Co. The afternoon, November 1, Dr Goebbels found the printers' yard crowded with his *Angriff* salesmen all wearing smart uniforms with the newspaper name picked out in silver on their red cap-bands. The presses glistened with chrome and oil like a locomotive at a station. He gave a signal and the presses started rolling. Everybody saluted, and Horst Wessel's anthem echoed until drowned by the whirring and clanking machinery.

Nov 3.

Now a daily, the newspaper differed little from its predecessor except in topicality. Goebbels demanded relentless personal attacks on Dr Weiss and the editor Dr Lippert complied. On November 3 the robust headline read 'BERNHARD WEISS ALLOCATES NIGHTCLUB CONCESSIONS: HIS BROTHER GETS THE BRIBES.' The story dealt with Weiss's murky dealings with his criminal brother Conrad and an unrelated Jewish night-club owner called Taube Weiss. On the sixth, as his headlines rhetorically asked 'BERNHARD WEISS TO RESIGN?', Goebbels privately rejoiced in his diary: 'Isidor being destroyed.' On November 8 *Angriff* reported that a communist had punched Zörgiebel in the face: 'Sometimes,' the newspaper editorialized, 'though not often, the acts of the communists are not entirely unwelcome to us.' For this licentious remark Grzesinski banned *Angriff* for a

Nov 8.

1930

week.¹⁰ Goebbels was livid; his newspaper would be banned on fifteen more occasions before August 1932, for periods ranging from three days to six weeks. Grzesinski, bolder than his predecessor, banned several Goebbels meetings too. Rumors abounded that he would soon ban the party as well. Goebbels doubted the police would really try that now.

Later in November the Sport Palace audience was treated to a double bill as he and Göring harangued them. 'I make short work of the Social Democrats,' recorded Goebbels. 'The giant arena thunders with rage, hatred, and screams of revenge.... How much further can this be pushed?'¹¹ He envied Göring his easy access to wealth and high society.

Already however a perceptible frost was settling over their relations. On

Oct 9

October 9 he had written of Göring, 'He is a true comrade—but not

devoid of ambition.' The day after the Reichstag had reconvened he

commented privately, 'I rather fear that Fatso Gregor [Strasser] and

Fatso Göring may shortly hit it off together.'¹² Admittedly the aviator

had introduced him to several useful contacts like Fritz Thyssen, the

steel baron; the former airman Erich Niemann, head of Mannesmann

Steel, and Wilhelm Tengelmann (Ruhr Coal). They would inject badly

needed funds into the party in Berlin.¹³ But Hitler had now appointed

Göring his personal viceroy in Berlin. This was bound to lead to friction

with the gauleiter. As a Reichsleiter Goebbels in fact ranked somewhat

higher than Göring in the party, and a harder tone of mordant criticism

crept into the diary entries.¹⁴ Viktoria von Dirksen revealed confidentially

to him that Göring was still having problems beating the recurring

morphine addiction inflicted on him by Austrian doctors in 1923. Having

already made observations about the aviator's evident corruption, he

made a note to keep an eye on him.¹⁵

ENTERING his HQ one day in November 1930 Goebbels sees a platinum blonde coming down the steps.

May

'Donnerwetter, Schimmel!' he exclaims to his private secretary. 'Who was that?'

The blonde is working in his press-clippings section. The next day he sends for her, to work on his confidential archives. She turns out to be wealthy, married, and twenty-nine—much older than his usual preference. She rates another diary mention on the fourteenth, helping to sort out early photographs.¹⁶

Thus he has finally met the woman he will marry. Other females will flit across his stage as, aged thirty-three, he belatedly approaches manhood. (He has detected the first gray hairs.) There is his former secretary, the 'wondrous, goodly, attractive, and affectionate' Ilse Stahl, who stays over one evening until six A.M.; 'and,' he writes, 'wholly sexually innocent, at that.'¹⁷ She blushes the next day and he scribbles her a note, 'Phone me at seven.' But that evening he has a visit from another, the blonde actress Hella Koch, who is already married.¹⁸ His roaming eye alights on Olga Förster, the fiancée of his new friend the broadcaster Arnolt Bronnen. Olga, another petite actress, visits him alone a few days

Dec 5, 1930

110 II: THE GAULEITER OF BERLIN

later and tries a much worn female ploy—she is engaged, she sighs, does not really love her Arnolt. 'But me,' records Goebbels smugly, 'she likes a lot.' He thinks of her that evening as he addresses the g Women's Order—the women all 'well behaved' and the girls all 's less.'¹⁹ He invites Bronnen and his Olga to the movies and she visits l again the next day. She wheels out every available weapon in the arsenal of female seduction.²⁰

He is a sitting duck. He is nest-building for the new apartment that and Xenia have found at Steglitz—No. 11 am Bäkequell. He browses furniture stores, determined to create a drawing room to rival C Göring's.²¹ His female admirers often come to see his performance in Reichstag. And perform at last he does: on December 6 the 'touchi and 'devoted' Olga Förster comes round. 'She loves me madly,' résumés afterwards, to which he adds a nonchalant parenthesis: '(1, Five days later Olga comes again—as indeed does Goebbels, not on twice, but thrice: (3, 4, 5).'²² A week later she marries her Arnolt Bron and that is that. 'No regrets,' writes Goebbels; not once, but twice² although it does pain him when a gossip columnist gets hold of the st and phones him about rumors that Olga's new husband has Jewish blo Bronnen assures Goebbels it is not so.²⁴

For two months after his seduction Goebbels' private life is a flurry former girlfriends. He has some catching up to do. He treats them, c hopes, more kindly than he writes of them in his diary. Helping move Steglitz, Ilse is crowned by a falling equestrian bronze and her h bleeds profusely. 'She yammers on all evening,' he writes heartlessly am quite reactionary,' he confesses to the Bronnens. 'Having, and raisi children is a job for life. My mother is the woman I most revere ... close to life. Today women want a say in everything, they just don't w children any more. They call it emancipation.'²⁵

IN December 1930 Goebbels staged his most effective propaganda de onstration yet, against the Ufa film version of *All Quiet on the West Front*. The film was pacifist and anti-German (its author had alrea emigrated). In one scene, German soldiers were depicted haggling w a dying comrade whose legs had been shot away, over who should inh his new boots. At its first public showing on the fifth, Goebbels' S. men emptied the cinema with stink bombs and live mice.²⁶ The Na found Berlin's police, many of them ex-army officers, in broad sympat with them. Angriff reported laconically that their Doctor had been prese 'for informational purposes,' and planned to see the rest of the film : informational purposes 'on Sunday evening.' His men took the hint a trashed the movie theater while thousands of cheering Berliners look on. The management canceled the next performance after that. Ev Mosse's *Berliner Tageblatt* dared not to criticize, because this time t gauleiter had the people behind him.²⁷ On the seventh the movie thea tried again. Goebbels staged another 'spontaneous' riot.²⁸ He called l further protests the next night. The police cordoned off entire distric

Dec 5.

"attacks"

Dec 7.

1930

This time, he estimated, forty thousand Berliners turned out to protest against the film; opposing newspapers put the figure at six thousand.²⁹ Under pressure from Grzesinski the Prussian minister of the interior Severing banned all open-air demonstrations.³⁰ On the eleventh the Reichstag itself debated the situation. Goebbels was evicted from the building, but the victory was his. At four P.M. the Brüning government ordered the objectionable film withdrawn from distribution 'because of the danger to Germany's image abroad,' then adjourned until February 3, 1931.³¹

'WE are going to be on the verge of power soon,' assessed Goebbels on December 2, 1930. 'But what then? A tricky question.' He mistrusted the alliance that Hitler was forming. Strasser warned the Nazi Reichstag bloc that they were making too much headway in bourgeois circles and that this would taint the party's image ('Bravo, Strasser,' observed Goebbels to himself). At a function at the Görings' afterward he had a long talk with Strasser, trying to find common ground with this impressive politician. 'I want to bury the hatchet,' wrote Goebbels, 'and I think he does too.'³²

He celebrated a pagan Christmas with the S.A. around a Yuletide bonfire at Schönerlinde. But he spent Christmas Eve with the Görings, who had less time for such pagan rites. Carin gave him a fine porcelain bowl, decorated with white mice. Her husband's morphine addiction caused him real concern, and he mentioned it to Hitler. Hitler said he would take Göring under his wing.³³

Scene

Turning to grand strategy Goebbels warned that their party was in danger of losing momentum—it was approaching freezing point, as he put it. 'We must start a crescendo of operations.' And he did: in July the *Red Flag* had challenged him to a public debate, knowing full well that for him to accept would be to invite arrest. His immunity restored, he now challenged both the Social Democrats and the communists to debate before a working-class audience at Friedrichshain. A thousand communists turned up on January 22, 1931. Their ace propagandist Walter Ulbricht spoke for nearly an hour; the communists then pitched into their rivals with chair legs and broken bottles; while Goebbels and his Nazis held their ground, in Goebbels' narrative, Ulbricht fled 'whimpering' to the S.A. stewards for protection, before leaving the hall with his jacket over his head. 'They banked on brawn instead of brain,' mocked Goebbels in *Angriff*, 'then found that where they had arms, our S.A. men didn't exactly have liverwursts dangling at their sides.' There were over one hundred injured including his chauffeur Kunisch and Olga Bronnen, who was taken to hospital with concussion.³⁴

A QUAVERING voice phones him in the small hours, after the riot: Olga, calling from the hospital. Goebbels remains callous and aloof.³⁵ Ilse Hess writes, chiding him for his attitude to women and holding up Carin Göring as a shining example of feminine supportiveness. Goebbels replies

Scene

Jan 1st
1930 → 1931

112 II: THE GAULBITER OF BERLIN

evasively, promising to look the Hesses up more often in 1931. He plans to spend three days every fortnight down in Munich then. 'Unfortunately my sister won't be able to come either to Munich or Berlin,' his letter continues. 'She has to keep my mother company—she's feeling very lonely since my father died.'³⁶ For the first time since he was at university he has not gone home for Christmas, guiltily suggesting in his diary that he must spare his mother the risk.³⁷

Jan 1. 1931
He moves into middle-class Steglitz on the first day of 1931. It is a well-appointed two-room apartment. Meanwhile one woman has by her beauty and sheer force of personality crowded out her juniors—Magda Quandt, the platinum blonde working in his private archives, who consists of press clippings from all over the world. There is a perfunctory classiness about her. She finds herself drawn toward this Savonarola who has set all Berlin by the ears. Late in January his diary records that she is bringing her work on the archives round to his new Steglitz apartment. 'Knowledge is power,' he explains to Magda, gesturing toward the clippings files.³⁸

She reminds him inevitably of a younger, classier Anka. The other girls' names gradually fade from the diary's pages. Charlotte stalks around with a face like thunder.

When Magda visits him again, Goebbels finds himself wishing that she were in love with him.³⁹

Two weeks later, the wish becomes father of the deed.

1901-1914
keep to 1930-31

15: Maria Magdalena Quandt

MAGDA Quandt was later the object of much malicious tittle-tattle. 'She was first married to a crook,' sneered Prince Otto von Bismarck, a German diplomat, 'and earned money through prostitution. Later she became Goebbels' friend, but this did not prevent her from going to bed with many of the habitués of the party meetings at the Sport Palace. . . . Now she goes around looking for men, and when she does not suffice there is also her sister-in-law [Ello Quandt], who is another whore.'¹

None of this was true. Magda had been born in Berlin on November 11, 1901. She believed her father was Oskar Ritschel, an engineer and inventor, of strict catholic upbringing. Her mother Auguste Behrend was twenty-two, an unmarried servant girl of the evangelical-lutheran faith working for a family in Berlin's upmarket Bülow Strasse.² In fact she later gave this street as Magda's birthplace, while her birth certificate puts it in a working class suburb at No. 25 Katzeler Strasse.³ Auguste was in Goebbels' words a frightful person;⁴ she was probably never married to Ritschel. In later years she was curiously vague about their divorce, stating that it was when Magda was 'about three'—the word 'about' seems to cast doubt upon the precision of the matrimony itself.⁵ It is unlikely that a man of Ritschel's standing would have married a servant girl.⁶ In a codicil to his will he mentioned his first wife Hedwig, but no others.⁷ To Goebbels, Ritschel was always a *Schubiak* (a scoundrel) and 'wretched prig.'⁸

Since Ritschel was living in Belgium, Auguste chose the infant's names herself—Johanna Maria Magdalena, or Magda for short. Ritschel arranged for the girl to be raised from 1906 in a convent at Thild in Belgium. Auguste visited her behind these forbidding and often chilly walls with Friedländer, her Jewish boyfriend whom she had (perhaps) married in 1908.⁹ Upset by the draftiness of Magda's dormitories her mother transferred her to another convent, at Villevoorde.

Her placid existence was interrupted by the Great War. The expatriates in Brussels were shipped home to Germany in evil-smelling cattle trucks. It took six days for the Friedländer family—they had all adopted his name—to reach Berlin. In a refugee camp an East Prussian woman, a Mrs Kowalsky, read Magda's palm. 'You will one day be a Queen of Life,' she pronounced. 'But the ending is fearful.' Magda, always a romantic, often retold this prophecy. She dramatized it sometimes,

more to 1945?
to 199 a to p 1992

1914-1927 Kac/w 1930-31

making the fortune-teller a gypsy, and having her appear mysteriously aboard the refugee train. Friedländer became manager (or perhaps an employee) of the four-star Eden hotel in Berlin.¹⁰ Their milieu Jewish: Magda's first real friend was Lisa Arlosorov, whose parents were Russian Jews living in Wilmersdorf. Ritschel paid for his daughter to attend Berlin's Kollmorgen lycée and sent her three hundred marks monthly pocket money.¹¹ Friedländer, the German Jew, faded from picture and history does not relate what became of him.

In the autumn of 1919 Magda Friedländer matriculated and was for a place at the exclusive Holzhausen ladies' college near Goslar. Ever nineteen she was a girl of considerable presence. Traveling down Goslar on February 18, 1920 she shared the reserved compartment of Dr Günther Quandt, a prematurely balding, wealthy entrepreneur twice her age.¹² His first wife had died in a 'flu epidemic two years before leaving him with two baby sons Hellmut and Herbert; he related all to Magda during the train journey. Strongly taken by this teenage with the foreign allure, he visited the college more than once, claiming to be her uncle, and took the matron and Magda out in his open landau. She dropped out of college, and phoned him instead; one thing led another, she invited her mother out to his lakeside villa at Babelsberg outside Berlin. Events moved rapidly toward matrimony. As a first step Quandt required her birth certificate to be amended so that she declared the *legitimate* daughter of Ritschel, to expunge the undesirable name Friedländer.¹⁴ Ritschel lodged the necessary application in 1920.¹⁵ As a second step, Quandt required his bride to embrace protestant faith. They were married on January 4, 1921 at Ritschel's parental house in Godesberg. After the honeymoon, said her mother later, Magda rushed into her arms wailing, 'How could you have let me marry him!' ^{her}¹⁶ But as their first and only child Harald was born just months later the matrimonial ardor evidently flickered just long enough.

Günther Quandt was old for his age. Escorting her to concerts or theater he usually fell asleep behind the Berliner Börsenzeitung.⁷ His boardroom was his true world. Once when she, with girlish pride produced her meticulous household accounts he absent-mindedly signed them in red ink, 'Seen and approved. Günther Quandt.' She rapidly tired of his company. Even when he went on business trips to exotic locations like Egypt or Palestine she was reluctant to go with him. He wrote regularly from abroad, she replied only once.¹⁸

She began a furtive relationship with his eldest son Hellmut. Sexually unfulfilled, the twenty-three-year-old Magda was fatally attracted to the gifted and delicate young man, then aged only eighteen. Her husband found it wise to send young Hellmut to complete his studies in London and Paris. After an operation for appendicitis in Paris, complications in and Hellmut died tragically in her arms in 1927. Heartbroken, she accompanied her husband on a six-month tour of the Americas, taking their big red Maybach car everywhere they went. Standing next to the balding, blazered, bow-tied millionaire Quandt this bored, blue-eyed

"Wall Street
Journal
Berlin"

blonde was a star attraction in high society on both sides of the Border. Something intimate evidently passed between Magda and the former President Herbert Hoover's nephew, because he came to Berlin after her estrangement from Quandt and pleaded with her to marry him.¹⁹

Back in Berlin Quandt had settled down and purchased a roomy winter home in Charlottenburg, while keeping on their new villa at New Babelsberg for the summer. Magda took refuge from her boredom in books—buying a ten-volume Buddhist catechism one day in Leipzig—and wafted from store to store, from one empty social event to the next until she could stand it no longer.²⁰ In the summer of 1929 she embarked on an affair with a thirty-year old law student, a Jew.²¹ She pleaded in vain with Quandt to release her. Hoping to catch him in some infidelity, she had him watched, but equally in vain. The student was a perfect and attentive lover, plying her with flowers, and she accompanied him on a trip to the Hotel Dreesen at Godesberg. This time however Quandt had hired the detectives; after reading their report, he threw her out.

Penniless and unemployed Magda returned to her mother while she negotiated a settlement with Quandt. Ello Quandt, her sister-in-law, advised her to blackmail her aging husband about a bundle of papers she had found.²² It proved unnecessary, however. He remained a perfect gentleman, agreed to a divorce, and willingly accepted the fiction that he had contributed to the breakdown of the marriage. 'Do we not all,' he would write, 'at times assume the blame, when in fact we are not in the wrong?'²³ Until she should remarry he granted her custody of their son, a lavish four-thousand-mark monthly allowance, and fifty thousand marks to purchase a house. She leased a seven-room luxury apartment at No. 2 Reichskanzler Platz in West Berlin.

There could be no question of marrying her unemployed student lover—marriage to anybody would cut off her alimony cornucopia. So she lived, loved, and traveled around as her law student's paramour while privately planning her future—without him. Drinking heavily one evening at the Nordic Ring club she met the Hohenzollern Prince August-Wilhelm (Goebbels' comrade, 'Auwi,' who had now joined the S.A. with a suitably high rank). The prince suggested that the party needed people like her. She heard Goebbels speak soon after; fascinated, she enrolled at the Nazi party's minuscule West End branch run by the young engineer's son Karl Hanke. Her Party membership dated from September 1, 1930.²⁴ She found herself taking charge of the local Women's Order. From there she gravitated to headquarters at No. 10 Hedemann Strasse. With her above-average education she was appointed secretary to Dr Hans Meinshausen, Goebbels' deputy as gauleiter.²⁵

Goebbels, it must be said, had little going for him at this time. He was a cripple; his total monthly salary was one-eighth of Magda's monthly alimony; but she heard him speak again, and she passed him once as he came limping up the steps. 'I thought I might almost catch fire,' she told her mother excitedly, 'under this man's searching, almost devouring, gaze.'²⁶ She told Ello Quandt that to judge by his suit Goebbels was

1927-1930 *had w* 1930-3
19

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Feb 4, 1931

obviously in need of, well, mothering. A few weeks later it struck Günt Quandt, who still frequently met her, that she talked of nothing but Nazis. 'At first I thought it was just a passing fad for the oratorical gift Dr Goebbels,' he wrote. Her law-student lover also noticed, and flattered that she seemed to be losing her head to that clubfooted loudmouth.

'You're mad,' she snapped. 'I could never love Goebbels!'

GOEBBELS had other preoccupations right now. At the end of January 1931 an S.A. man had gunned down the Berlin communist Max Schmer; four days later Nazis shot dead the communist Otto Grüneberg a Charlottenburg street fight.²⁷ On February 4 police chief Grzesin banned *Angriff* for two weeks. Goebbels was also down with 'flu. W sicknessen him even more than this was how close to the communists found his position really was. After one Reichstag interruption on the fifth a Social Democrat rounded on him with the stinging rejoinder 'That is from a gentleman . . . fully aware that Messrs Hitler, Frick, Ju etc., have been to the Ruhr several times to explain their National Socialist program to the gentleman of heavy industry and to demonstrate that they have nothing to fear from the National Socialist brand of socialism.'

A few days later the government revoked the immunity of the hundred deputies, including all the Nazis. Goebbels alone had eight criminal cases pending. He recommended to his colleagues that rather than just becoming 'poorly paid extras' they should walk out *en masse*. Their salaries would stop, but the tactics were undeniably sound. The move would demonstrate to voters that the Nazis dissociated themselves from the government's rule by emergency decree.

On February 10 the Nazis marched in, remained standing while the bloc leader Franz Stöhr read out the tough declaration which Goebbels had formulated, then marched out again. After that, one hundred police officers raided Hedemann Strasse and searched the building. Goebbels' Lustgarten rally of the fifteenth was banned on the usual pretext ('danger to peace and quiet').

'Your peace and quiet,' swore Goebbels in his diary, 'will be endangered soon enough.'²⁸

IT has been a tense and angry week for Dr Goebbels in the Reichstag. At its end Magda Quandt comes round to see him in his new, luxurious Steglitz apartment. He finds himself captivated by this woman. Her dress is subtle, her whole posture is that of a person who now knows where she is going.²⁹ It is a Saturday—February 14, 1931—and Goebbels enters certain code phrases, circumlocutions, into his diary which show that this visit is not for mere archival gossip: 'And stays for a very long time; he carefully records. And, 'How are you, my queen?' The answer follows '(1)'. Magda has seduced him, after Olga only the second girl in his life to do so. Sunday finds him in a trance, or 'replete with satiated happiness' as he writes. Magda writes him a fond note the next day.³⁰

Magda Quandt returns to her elegant leased apartment and servant

March 15, 1931

and Dr Goebbels goes over to Dortmund where twenty thousand people are waiting to hear him. In Hamburg he speaks to twelve thousand.³¹ His mind is on her. When he speaks at Weimar, Anka's Weimar, he takes Magda with him. He phones Anka, speaks tersely with her, and decides that he can't stand her whining and her 'lack of discipline' any longer. Now that he has Magda he can afford to be stand-offish.

He takes Magda to the automobile show in Berlin. She wants to buy a new car, but can't make up her mind. Does she buy him one? Suddenly he has a new Opel (it has been stolen already by March 9).³² They have the usual rows. Magda writes a farewell note. Goebbels has seen it all before—'the same old melody!' he writes, amused. He can handle it. She comes round for a 'very formal' talk and flounces out as though to leave. Goebbels holds the door open for her. 'You are so hard,' she murmurs, and relents.³³ She visits several times during March 1931, chats, laughs, makes music with him, meals for him, and—occasionally—love. On the ninth he adds '(2, 3)' to his score, and five days later '(4, 5)'.³⁴

But mysteries abound. She is often sick; she does not yet invite him back to her own fine apartment in Reichskanzler Platz. Sometimes she is inexplicably away, or does not answer her phone. Jealousy wells up within him. At this time the adventure probably means very little to her; but not to him.³⁵ Goebbels convinces himself that he has drawn a historic line under his philanderings. 'I'm going to stop the womanizing,' he writes secretly on March 15, 'and favor just the one.'

March
1931

IN Hamburg the gauleiter Karl Kaufmann had once remarked to Goebbels that Brüning for one considered Göring mad.³⁶ Göring had certainly been unbalanced by Carin's near fatal illness during January 1931. After visiting her sickbed Goebbels wrote that he revered her, a word he had used before only for his mother.³⁷ He was alarmed by Göring's character regression, probably a result of his addiction. 'We've got to get him into a mental clinic in time,' he wrote despairingly. 'He mustn't go to the dogs like this.'³⁸ Hitler promised to tackle Göring about the morphine. But the aviator's behavior worsened to outright megalomania. 'He alternates,' observed Goebbels in February 1931, 'between imagining he's Reich chancellor and imagining he's defense minister. . . . Today he's just ludicrous.'³⁹

Febr.
1931

After both men spoke at Essen to an audience of sixteen thousand, including the industrialists Krupp and Thyssen, Göring accompanied him back to Berlin but refused to discuss his drug problem. The gauleiter's remarks about him took on a bitter edge. After they had both addressed some twenty-five thousand people in Frankfurt, Goebbels wrote that Göring had spoken the 'usual crap'.⁴⁰ One Sunday he again tackled Göring about the addiction; the aviator's spluttered denials were too thin to be plausible to Goebbels.⁴¹ They separated that evening 'half friends again,' as Goebbels noted, in which was implicit that they were now half enemies.⁴²

March
1931

1931

118 II: THE GAULEITER OF BERLIN

ON March 6, 1931 the gauleiter addressed another huge meeting at Sport Palace. His audience greeted Grzesinski's two police observations with roars of 'Out!' lasting several minutes, and Goebbels heaped own special kind of ridicule on them. On the following day *Ang* repeated his words verbatim.⁴³ Seeking public sympathy, on the thirteenth he staged a stupid bomb plot: having ordered the S.A. man Eduard Wi to open all mail addressed to him at HQ he arranged for a crude homemade device to be delivered to him there.⁴⁴ Although there is no doubt about Goebbels' authorship of the attack, he lied to his own diary about it.⁴⁵ More court actions crowded in on him—eight altogether during March.⁴⁶ On March 14 the Reichstag decided that he could be arrested after all. The courts declared Severing's ban on the Brownshirt uniform in Prussia unconstitutional.⁴⁷ On the fifteenth Grzesinski nevertheless repeated the ban, and he imposed a speaking prohibition on Goebbels in Berlin, in revenge for the Sport Palace episode. He instructed his police to prevent the gauleiter from speaking to transport workers in Hasenheide the next night.⁴⁸ Hitting back, *Angriff* instructed Berlin's Nazis to wear their uniforms and to sue Grzesinski if he ordered any arrests. The next day, two Nazis gunned down a communist deputy in Hamburg. The press called for a general ban on the party, and the speaking ban on Goebbels was extended to the whole of Prussia.⁴⁹

After that Brüning's emergency decrees could no longer contain rising discontent. Goebbels arrived at one huge Königsberg rally to find that he had been banned from even entering the hall, where two thousand had gathered to hear him. Thousands of cheering East Prussians escorted him and Prince August-Wilhelm back to the railway station, carrying the little Doctor shoulder-high up to the platform. He climbed onto a bench, a police major ordered truncheons drawn, and thirty of his officers waded in, laying out both Goebbels and the prince. The incident was widely reported abroad.⁵¹ Magda Quandt visited the injured gauleiter upon his return to Berlin, and her accomplishments that night ('6, 7') made up for his bruises. In his diary he passed over the irritable letters from Hella Koch, from Erika, and from Charles almost without comment. 'I now love just one,' he wrote.⁵²

When Hitler now invited him down to the Obersalzberg for Easter, Goebbels surprisingly turned him down.⁵³ His notes had recently contained several disparaging references to that 'damned party home,' Brown House; to Hitler's coffeehouse mentality and milieu; and to Führer's softness and 'fanatical compromising' nature.⁵⁴ He spent Easter with Magda instead, and added two more notches to the score, '(8, 9) Nine times in six weeks.'⁵⁵ It was not, perhaps, enough to justify the jack-rabbit reputation which posterity would endow him with, and which he had carefully encouraged.

ON March 26, the Reichstag adjourned for nearly seven months. Ten days later Brüning issued an emergency decree allowing his government to ban any meetings, and to censor the leaflets and posters of any party

Easter

1931

'And Brüning is Göring's friend!' commented Goebbels sarcastically. He did not mind the ban on speaking. At the big Sport Palace meeting on March 27 a recording of his latest speech was played. But he did fear a ban on his newspaper, which was now printing eighty thousand twelve-page copies a day.⁵⁶ The supreme court declared Grzesinski's latest ban illegal. Meanwhile Hitler appealed to all his followers to avoid being provoked into illegal actions.⁵⁷

This was particularly addressed to the S.A. The taut relationship between them and the party overhung Goebbels throughout that spring. He was torn between loyalty to Hitler, and his gratitude to these long-suffering streetfighters. In Munich Hitler had confided to him in October 1930 that he was gradually going to reconstruct the S.A. and recover total control of it.⁵⁸ But Goebbels found it hard not to sympathize with the criticisms of Munich voiced by his Berlin S.A. men. Their plight was unenviable: two-thirds of them were unemployed, including their Oberführer Bruno Wetzel.⁵⁹ While in Breslau one S.A. *Sturm* could not go on parade in the snow because they had no boots, they heard of the opulence of Hitler's new HQ in Munich and of elite new S.S. units being raised which were no longer subordinate to the S.A. as they should have been.⁶⁰

Both Walter Stennes, the supreme S.A. commander in eastern Germany including Berlin, and his subordinate commanders were already deeply concerned about Munich's 'wretched waffling about legality' and Hitler's persistent wooing of the bourgeois parties. When Hitler now demanded that the S.A. membership cough up another four thousand marks for a painting to go in his study, they were baffled.⁶¹

At the end of November 1930 Hitler had revealed to his party lieutenants his latest plans for the S.A. He was now their commander, with the pallid, flabby Ernst Röhm as his chief of staff. Goebbels had vaguely known Röhm since 1924 and had read his memoirs, *A Traitor's Story*.⁶² After Röhm's return from Bolivia he had entered in his diary, 'He's nice to me and I like him. An open, upright soldier type.' Two weeks later he added, 'He's a dear fellow, but no match for Stennes.'⁶³ Stennes however noticed only that Röhm was a blatant homosexual, who made few friends other than other notorious homosexuals like Karl Ernst and his lover Paul Röhrbein.⁶⁴ Stennes had nothing but contempt for Röhm and his unmanly ways.⁶⁵

Dr Goebbels deduced that Hitler intended to phase out the regional S.A. commanders like Stennes. He suspected that Stennes was plotting to set up a revolutionary Free Corps—'proof,' he felt, 'how naïve these fellows are about politics.'⁶⁶ But Goebbels was even more naïve. He solemnly tipped off Röhm in January 1931 that Röhrbein was a homosexual, and noted afterward that Röhm was 'very concerned.'⁶⁷ Only six weeks later did he learn the truth about Röhm from Stennes. 'Disgusting!' he expostulated in his diary—his own sexuality being at last a matter of record. 'Here too Hitler is paying too little attention. The party must not be allowed to become a paradise for poofers.'⁶⁸

Oct.
1930

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scenes

1931

March 23, 1931

120 II: THE GAULEITER OF BERLIN

Fearing Stennes' growing influence meanwhile, Hitler removed seven S.A. regions (North Saxony, East Prussia, Danzig, and Mecklenburg) from his control. Stennes sent a long letter of complaint to Röhm, causing Goebbels to wonder if Stennes was not biting off more than he could chew.⁶⁹ Röhm personally came to Berlin and there was a furious row with Stennes which ended with a categorical refusal by the S.A. commander to swear obedience to Röhm.⁷⁰

Scene?

March 23
1931

This put Goebbels in a dilemma. Not only did he need the SA stormtroopers, they provided much of the staff of *Angriff* too. In Munich on March 23 Ernst Röhm told him he was going to get rid of critics like Captain Stennes.⁷¹ Goebbels was horrified and urged both Hitler and Röhm not to do it. But Hitler's loyalty was to Röhm, his old and intimate friend. In his diary, Goebbels began writing alibis: 'If there's got to be a clean break,' he recorded on March 25 'then I'm with Hitler.' At the same time he told Stennes' men that he was with them.⁷² He had no choice but to equivocate. The Berlin S.A. was approaching flashpoint. All their hatreds were mirrored in the sarcastic *Samizdat* newsletter which now began to circulate in Berlin. One dated March 20 referred mockingly to 'our own Aryan son Dr Goebbels, whom race-experts have branded an Israelite,' and described cruelly how he had left one meeting early via a back door 'on account of his aching paw.'⁷³

Scene

*

March 31,
1931

This S.A. crisis came to a head in the last week of March 1931. Kurt Hanke, the young and virile commander of Goebbels' West End district, told him of rumors that Röhm was about to dismiss Stennes. Fearing this would bring his empire tumbling down, Goebbels said he would fight tooth and claw to prevent it. Stennes had gone to Pomerania the Tuesday, March 31, ostensibly to cool down S.A. hotheads.⁷⁴ In his absence, a telegram arrived in Berlin ordering all his senior officers to Weimar for a meeting with Hitler. It was clear that he was about to dismiss Stennes. According to police intelligence, he also intended to relieve Goebbels as Gauleiter.⁷⁵ Goebbels had already left to speak in Dresden; from there he drove straight on to Weimar, to see Hitler. That may be the occasion which Elsa Bruckmann later related, when Hitler had planned to sack Goebbels for disloyalty—whereupon the Gauleiter threw himself whining at his feet in a most unworthy manner.⁷⁶ To balance Hitler decided to keep Goebbels, but nothing could save Stennes.

CK notes

see
pp 1
p 121?

Wetzel, the Berlin S.A. commander, had already received a phone call at around 8:30 P.M. reporting that Röhm had ordered Stennes' dismissal.⁷⁷ Wetzel's men decided to defy Hitler's summons to Weimar. At four A.M. Kurt Daluge, the regional S.S. chief (S.S. Oberführer) typed an urgent warning to Röhm, reporting that since midnight the local S.A. commanders had been meeting in secret cabal in Berlin, and that mutiny was once again in the air. Daluge in fact suspected that Stennes was acting in cahoots with the government, because the mutineers had learned—perhaps through government wiretaps—of Hitler's intentions. 'Jahn has told them,' reported Daluge to Röhm, referring to Stennes' chief of staff, 'that Stennes is to be dismissed by our Führer

April 1, 1933

a meeting in Weimar at midday today April 1.' The mutineers, he added, had decided to defy Hitler and send a delegation to *Goebbels* in Weimar to win him over for 'an independent freedom movement.'⁷⁸

Things were thus in an unholy mess. It was now April 1, 1931. At about four-thirty A.M. Stennes arrived back in Berlin from Pomerania. A few hours later he was wakened with news that the papers were reporting he had been dismissed. He discounted the story and went back to sleep. Meanwhile his commanders in Berlin went on the rampage, mutinied, and seized *Goebbels'* gau HQ and the *Angriff* editorial offices in the Hedemann Strasse building.

Thus the second 'Stennes putsch' began. Perhaps this is a misnomer. Stennes himself was still largely in the dark. At two-thirty P.M. he received, first a registered letter from Röhm dismissing him, then orders from Hitler to go to Weimar.⁷⁹ But the fat was already in the fire. This time the S.A.'s political actions met with active support from both *Goebbels'* staff and the *Angriff's* employees. Dr Weissauer published a statement in the newspaper backing Stennes. Whatever *Goebbels'* private feelings, however, he knew which side his bread was buttered. He wrote unhesitatingly in his diary, 'I stand loyal to Hitler. . . . The S.A. must come into line.' He applied for a court order to evict the S.A. trespassers from the building. Stennes was still floundering. He sent this telegram to Hitler in Weimar: 'IS RÖHM'S DISMISSAL ORDER VALID, I.E. BACKED BY YOU? SIGNED STENNES.' Hitler responded ambiguously: 'YOU ARE NOT TO ASK QUESTIONS BUT HAVING RECEIVED A PROPER ORDER ARE TO REPORT TO WEIMAR AT ONCE WITH THE COMMANDERS AS LISTED. SIGNED ADOLF HITLER.'

By now Dalüege was also in Weimar. Hitler gave *Goebbels* sweeping powers to smash the putsch in Berlin, 'regardless of consequences,' and to dismiss the disruptive elements regardless of rank or office in the party. 'You have my backing,' he wrote in this document, 'whatever you do.'⁸⁰ At that evening's public meeting in Weimar both *Goebbels* and Daluege swore undying loyalty to Hitler.⁸¹ In Berlin meanwhile Stennes had printed thousands of handbills announcing that *Goebbels* was sacked as gauleiter for 'breach of faith' and replaced by Wetzel; the handbill once more rubbed in the Brown House scandal.⁸² Ignoring frantic appeals from his HQ to return to Berlin, *Goebbels* went south to Munich, sharing a railroad compartment with Hitler.

Hitler was undoubtedly shaken by these events. The next day's bourgeois press crowed over his embarrassment. In an article in the VB he vigorously attacked Stennes for his treachery.⁸³ *Goebbels* now wondered which dark powers might have bribed Stennes and Weissauer to act as they had. The party later obtained copies of urgent Berlin police instructions ordering police officers not to seize Stennes' handbills announcing his takeover.⁸⁴ Hitler signed an authorization for *Goebbels* to act 'ruthlessly' in purging his Berlin gau. 'Better no National Socialist movement at all,' this read, 'than a party in disarray, without discipline or obedience.'⁸⁵ It was time for backbiting all round. Hearing that Göring had pleaded with Hitler to give these powers to *him*, *Goebbels* noted: 'I'll never forgive

See ?
April
19

April
8,
1933

April 8, 1931

122 II: THE GAULEITER OF BERLIN

Göring... He's a mound of frozen crap.⁸⁶ Acting from Munich HQ issued appeals for loyalty and sacked the mutinous S.A. men. Sten took perhaps two hundred others with him, and began a brief flirtat with Dr Otto Strasser.

Line ?

WORRIED and ill Goebbels finally slunk back to Berlin on Wednesday April 8, 1931. Paul Schultz, who had replaced Stennes, assured him the Berlin S.A. now stood behind him. Goebbels' five district commanders confirmed that evening that not one party official had defected only S.A. men.⁸⁷ Addressing his officials on the tenth he explained he had put so much distance between himself and Berlin during crisis. During a battlefield crisis, he said, the generals did not go into mutinous trenches either.⁸⁸ 'Of course the whole Jewish press is shriek with glee,' he realized privately, and confined himself to bed with thermometer for company.⁸⁹

Why is he so afraid this time?
Is he made impression by Sten?
Is he weakened by Magdala?
that is, does he now want to live when,
+ not in politics? Dulcor.

April 10, 1931

16: The Stranger and the Shadow

THE thermometer's mercury thread has climbed to 40°C. Goebbels is ill, but Magda phones only once, saying she's at the Quandt estate in Mecklenburg.¹ He struggles out of bed on the Friday April 10, 1931, to speak to two thousand party officials. On Saturday he learns that she is back in Berlin; she does not contact him. Ilse and Olga fuss around the invalid. He is too weak to resist. On Sunday he phones Magda's home. She is not there; later however she phones him, and admits that she has been seeing off a young lover—but he has brought things to a head and fired a revolver at her. She tells Goebbels she is injured (in fact the Jewish law student's bullet has struck the door frame next to her. 'If you had really aimed at me and hit me,' she scoffs, 'I might have been impressed. I find your behavior ridiculous').²

Too late Goebbels realizes how much he loves her. Must he always be lonely? These and other thoughts lay siege to him. He spends Sunday pining for her and writing a gripping description of his jealous delirium. Perhaps thirty times he telephones her home, but nobody answers. He glares at the phone, willing it to ring. Staying home on Monday the thirteenth he at last reaches her by phone. They drive out to a remote forest house at Pichelsdorf. She pours out her heart about the grief her crazed ex-lover has caused her. She answers his reproaches with floods of tears, the last resort of feminine culpability; but she wishes to spend Saturday with the other man, to say farewell. She refuses Goebbels' ultimatum to spend that Saturday with him. 'Thus it is over,' writes Goebbels. Unconsciously scriptwriting again, he adds: 'She exits weeping.'³

ON the twelfth he had returned to gau HQ for the first time since the putsch. Everybody was very kind to him and the S.A. stood smartly to attention. But there were problems. The account books showed that *Angriff* was deep in debt.⁴ He instructed Hans Hinkel, Weissauer's successor, to cut back its size from twelve to eight pages.⁵ His deputy Mainshausen warned that Göring was double-crossing them. Goebbels needed few warnings on that score.⁶

The next morning he was back in court, charged with having said in a speech at the Veterans' Building in 1929, 'We don't speak of corruption in Berlin or bolshevism at City Hall. No! We just say Isidor Weiss, and

April-
10

Scene

Scene

1931
that says it all.⁷ He was fined two hundred marks on one count, fifteen hundred marks for having picked on Weiss 'because of his Jewish origin still running a high fever, he limped out. He suspected traitors everywhere. 'Keep on marching' he penned into his diary. 'Don't look back.
17. There seemed no end to the court actions. On the seventeenth he was fined two thousand marks, then five hundred, and finally one hundred more for contempt of court. More summonses were heaped onto desk.⁹ He resolved to take revenge on all the Isidors of this world when the time came.

A severe depression seized him, a mental crisis which he acknowledged only when he deemed that it had passed.¹⁰ Magda's shenanigans had triggered it. There was a 'shadow' still lurking around her apartment. Apparently she had had a stormier past than the comparatively innocent Dr Goebbels had suspected. Insane with jealousy, he trusted nobody. The word *spies* surfaced more often in his diary. He searched for them in his HQ, he even suspected Hinkel; his political life seemed more arduous than ever, a constant round of strange hotel beds briefly sighted at three A.M., of six A.M. railroad platforms for the return to Berlin, of persecutions, court hearings, prohibitions, and the constant fear of violence or even assassination.¹¹ *reference*

May Grzesinski enforced a new three-month ban on Goebbels speaking which sometimes meant listening to the pompous and rapid Hermann Göring standing in for him. Hitler now entrusted the aviator Göring with important missions abroad. In May 1931 he visited Rome and returned with a signed photograph of Mussolini for the Führer. 'Jack of all trades sniffed Goebbels, meaning master of none.'¹²

April 25.
27. Eight more court appearances faced him late that April. 'Maddenir he recorded. 'But I'm not going to lose my nerve.'¹³ At Itzehoe in Hamburg he faced a four-month prison sentence but was acquitted. Squirring under Grzesinski's speaking ban, on April 25 he reluctantly signed an undertaking not to make fun of the police observers assigned to his meetings any more.¹⁵ Another hearing was scheduled at Moabit for April 27. He notified the court however that he could not miss an important Nazi meeting in Munich. But the Berlin courts had issued a bench warrant after his non-appearance. As he was eating at the Riga Garden hotel three detectives arrested him and escorted him to the night train to Berlin. 'So much for immunity!' he fumed. 'With a Barmat, Sklarek and a Kutisker,' declared Angriff that morning, referring to the Jewish racketeers, 'they didn't go to such lengths. But then they were not the elected representatives of sixty thousand Germans—just major embezzlers!'¹⁶ Press photographers crowded the platform as the train arrived back in Berlin. 'The Judenpresse is howling with joy,' Goebbels noted. In Room 664 at the Moabit courthouse (Angriff helpfully told its readers where the eight new cases were to be heard) the world's press awaited him.¹⁷ He told the judges what he thought of them, then sat down and refused to speak another word. He was given a month's suspended sentence, and heavy fines. Choking with rage he lodged an appeal.¹⁸

his lawyer he snarled, indicating the prosecutor Dr Stenig, 'Let's make a note of that man for later.'¹⁹

May brought still more cases.²⁰ But daylight was filtering into this long dark tunnel of police harassment. On June 12 he was again acquitted. 'The courts,' he gloated, 'are getting to whiff of things to come'—a reference to the growing likelihood that Brüning's days in office were numbered. 'Then it's our turn.'²¹

KEEPING a tryst with Magda at the five-star Kaiserhof hotel, he recognizes that the other man, the 'Shadow,' is still coming between them.²² Fretting, he spends his evenings alone at Steglitz fingering his piano keyboard, leafing idly through a book, or fitfully dozing. He phones countless times without reaching her. After one colossal Sport Palace gathering she invites him back to her own luxurious apartment for the first time. The Shadow has gone. Her elegant suite of seven rooms includes a music room, and quarters for her guests and servants. He decides that the worst is over between them. His diary soon finds him making plans for the future with her: and he is no longer keeping score.²³

Shadows flit in and out from his own past. Magda remains a vexatious enigma still, often inexplicably unpunctual for their dates. Once she tells him that 'a stranger' has warned her that Dr Goebbels is a Jew, and has shown her an original letter 'stolen from the gau HQ files' written a decade earlier by Goebbels to Director Cohnen, a family friend at Mönchen-Gladbach. Cohnen was the gauleiter's *real* father, suggests the stranger, who also mentions Peter Simons, the husband of Goebbels' maternal aunt Anna. 'This is what I have to put up with,' winces Goebbels, puzzling over the stranger's identity.²⁴ (The 'stolen' document is probably a product of Magda's own feline snooping around while working in his personal archives, but this evidently does not occur to him.)

The two spend Whitsun on her ex-husband's estate Severin in Mecklenburg. Günther Quandt's manager, a leading local Nazi, lets them in. Alone at last they iron out their remaining differences. Sometimes she still wounds him with an ill-considered word, but the wound soon heals.²⁵ He longs for a hearth and home. He begins talking about setting up a matrimonial home when victory is theirs; this is comfortingly vague, and she goes along with that.²⁶ After he returns to Berlin—alone, as she has asked to stay on for another day in this country idyll—he writes, 'When we have conquered the Reich we shall become man and wife.'²⁷ In fact Magda probably entertained little real ambition to harness her uxorial ambitions to such an uncertain chariot. He writes her a real love letter—the first such essay in ten years.²⁸ Visiting her to give her a clock a few days later, he is thunderstruck to find the Shadow still living there; Magda tells him that since the student will not budge, she is moving out and will have the police evict the trespasser.²⁹ As a sop to Goebbels, she agrees he shall have the right to walk young Harald to the Herder school across the square.

After speaking at Erfurt Goebbels meets Anka Stalherm and breaks

1931

the news about Magda to her. He is pleased to see that Anka goes to pieces. She wants not to believe him, thinks she can hook him back now. But it is too late—'I am with Magda,' he vows to his diary, 'I shall stay with her.'³⁰ When his latest book *Struggle for Berlin* appears in the year, he will have it mailed to Anka with a typed note ('Dear Party member...') signed by his secretary.³¹

THE police lifted the speaking ban on May 1, 1931; and how the thousands cheered when he rose at the Sport Palace that evening. But the ban had hurt. His gau was in debt.³² He decided on a two-month push to double membership. By mid-June 1931 it had risen to about two thousand.³³

Angriff too was entering troubled times. On May 4 the editor Dagot Dürr had finally begun serving his two-month sentence for libeling Weiss. Each visit in jail was a reminder to Goebbels of the volcano around which he himself was dancing.³⁴ He found he had much more in common with the ordinary S.A. men than with the party's self-important aristocracy. 'We are still a worker's party,' he wrote. Göring irritated him the most. At a rally in Saxony he cold-shouldered the former aviator. 'He's sick,' he felt. 'Looks a wreck.'³⁵ 'He really does go creeping up Hitler's arse,' he added crudely. 'Were he not so fat he might succeed too.' In Munich for a leadership conference on June 9 however he found himself arguing alone against this 'disgusting... big-mouthed slob. have few friends in the party,' he realized, yet again. 'Virtually j Hitler.'³⁶

AS the recession bit deeper, the central parties in the government flailed at the parties on the left and right. On June 16 Brüning enacted emergency press decree. Berlin's police chief Grzesinski boasted, 'I powers have been augmented just as I desired.' The next fourteen days would see the prohibition of *Angriff*, the *VB*, and a string of other papers Nazi and bourgeois alike. The press protested vigorously. When the *Frankfurter Post* was banned, the rival *Frankfurter Zeitung* bravely reprinted the offending sentences for its readers to judge.³⁷ *Angriff* appeared on the nineteenth.

Hitler himself started spending more time in Berlin. Police agents sighted him with Goebbels at the Kaiserhof on May 9.³⁸ Jealous of the intimacy, Goebbels' rivals continued to spread rumors of his imminent resignation. He published a defiant denial.³⁹ That same evening he staged the gau's annual general meeting at the Sport Palace—the first time that any party had dared to hire the huge arena for such a purpose. He blamed Himmler, who had taken over leadership of the S.S. from Erhard Heide for the rumors; he found that the S.S. was now spying on his HQ and demanded, visiting Munich on July 2, that they desist. After speaking to forty thousand at Dresden's cycle-racetrack⁴⁰ he set off on a month's seaside vacation; he took Magda—'she is a lady, a woman, and a lover' and a secretary Ilsa Bettge, whose role, was less clearly defined.

July 1931

With Goebbels temporarily absent, on August 1 Hitler appointed the virtually unknown journalist Dr Otto Dietrich as chief of his new Press Office. Dietrich, six weeks older than Goebbels, had got to know Hitler only recently, while working for the *Rheinisch-Westfälische Zeitung*. Goebbels loathed all journalists; but for Dietrich he would reserve a very special fury until the end.⁴¹

THAT July he spends five weeks with Magda in a cottage on the cliffs at Sankt Peter listening to storm rains pounding the roof while the gray-white waves of the North Sea lash the rocks below. He makes love to her, he plays the piano, and he begins a new book, *The Struggle for Berlin*, dictating a new chapter every day or so.

Unemployment has passed the five-million mark. Brüning's miseries are music to Goebbels' ears. He bickers sometimes with Magda, probing remorselessly into the darker crannies of her past. He dredges up noisome episodes, which he attributes to her wayward manner and tries to forget.⁴² The more she teases him with stories of past lovers, the more helplessly jealous he becomes. It seems that some of these old flames are not extinguished even now.⁴³ No matter how loving Magda is, he cannot forget that before him she loved another. 'She has loved too much,' he writes, 'and keeps telling me only the half of it. And I lie awake until the small hours lashed by jealousy.'⁴⁴ Driven by these powerful emotional engines he has completed three hundred pages of the manuscript when he returns to Berlin: he truly loves Magda, but a shadow still darkens the horizon.

IMPORTANT new faces met him at his gau HQ. The dynamic, heavily built, square-jawed Karl Hanke, aged twenty-seven, was his new chief of organization.⁴⁵ He had a dry, ironic manner that belied his tough, no-nonsense attitude. Berlin's new propaganda chief was Karoly Kampmann; determined to force back the rising Munich tide of bourgeois *Reaktion*—best translated by the word 'diehards'—Goebbels ordered Kampmann to concentrate his efforts on recruiting new members from Berlin's factory floors.⁴⁶ Millions of leaflets and stickers were printed with the new slogan, 'Into the factories!'⁴⁷ That was the only place, Goebbels would write, where the workers could be won over—and he intended to gain ten thousand new members in the next three months.⁴⁸ In consequence of this shift of emphasis to the factory floor, the regular pace of his public propaganda slowed down that autumn; in October, his gau would stage only 125 public meetings.⁴⁹

DURING 1931 the political violence worsened. Since May 1930 there had been twenty-nine political murders in Berlin alone—including twelve communists, six Nazis, one Stahlhelm member, two Social Democrats, and four policemen.⁵⁰ In July 1931 Ernst Röhm put a new man in charge of Berlin's S.A., the thirty-four-year-old aristocrat Count Wolf Heinrich von Helldorff. Helldorff had joined the party only in August 1930;

1931

Goebbels, meeting him a month later, had not liked him at the time whiff of perfume caught his nostrils, and he wondered if Helldorff was a poofter like the rest. He had since then tackled Hitler about Röhm's homosexuality, about which a Munich newspaper had made headlines in June.⁵¹ Goebbels concluded that Helldorff's appointment was a back door affair with Röhm and his bisexual adjutant Karl Ernst. 'The fut of the S.A. looks grim to me,' wrote Goebbels. '§175 [the clause of penal code on homosexuality] casts its shadow right across it.'⁵²

Yet he soon came round to liking, even adoring, Helldorff, forming enduring friendship with the scoundrel which, in the words of the Spar proverb, tells us much about Goebbels himself. Born on October 1896, the arrogant, wastrel son of a blue-blooded landowner, Helldorff was a thoroughly nasty piece of work, a bully, a Jew-baiter, and a murderer. Police records showed one warrant against him in 1922 for manslaughter, and another for carrying an unlicensed weapon.⁵³ During Stennes' revolt he had sided with the insurgents, saying 'Hitler is a traitor.'⁵⁴ None of this appeared to bother Goebbels. Early in September 1931 he briefed Helldorff and his chief of staff Karl Ernst to stage an operation—ostensibly a demonstration by the unemployed—to rough up Jews along Kurfürstendamm on their New Year's day, Yom Kippur.⁵⁵ On the chosen day, September 12, Helldorff cruised up and down Kurfürstendamm in his green Opel, according to police reports, directing stormtroopers, who were disguised as ordinary passers-by, to set up anybody who looked like a Jew.⁵⁶ The police however had been tipped off—one disgruntled S.A. man in Potsdam said later that it was odd that the police learned what had happened at a secret briefing attended by Goebbels, Helldorff, and Ernst⁵⁷—and arrested Helldorff with Ernst and another member of his staff Heini Gewehr, and thirty-four other S.A. men.⁵⁸ (More likely the informer was Goebbels' own secretary, Stahl.)⁵⁹ The police docket six days later described Helldorff's private life as messy—he was swamped with unpaid bills, currently separated from his wife, and not on speaking terms with his family, and he had recently bankrupted his family estate at Wolmirstedt. The court sentenced him to six months in prison as ringleader of the riot but he did not serve one day.⁶⁰ At Helldorff's appeal in January Goebbels stood by his friend, screamed at the prosecutor Dr Stenig, outrageously insulted the court, demanded that the chief of police produce his informant as a witness, and flatly refused to testify otherwise, bringing about the collapse of the prosecution case and earning a fine of five hundred marks in contempt. Helldorff's sentence was reduced to a piffling fine of one hundred marks.⁶¹ (His lawyer was Roland Freisler, whom he would meet again under different circumstances after July 20, 1944.) Helldorff's streetfighters were less fortunate: they received prison sentences of up to two years for affray.⁶² This inequality widened the breach between Goebbels and the S.A. men, and that winter saw several intemperate leaflets circulating in Berlin claiming that he and Helldorff had left them in the lurch.⁶³

Sept 11, 1931

His attitude toward the S.A. officers became ambivalent. He began sniping against Röhm.⁶⁴ But he kept up his support for the 'army's' rank and file. On September 11, 1931—the day before the Kurfürstendamm riot—he resorted to his old propaganda tricks at a Sport Palace fundraiser for the S.A. clinic, at which he presented six recent S.A. casualties.

On Goebbels' instructions [wrote one of the six] we were given brand-new white hospital gowns and the staff at the party clinic began to bandage us. One of us who just had a bad headache was given a gigantic turban bandage. Another ... who had been kicked in the stomach was given a large and totally pointless bandage around his abdomen. As we entered the Sport Palace it was announced that we were the 'victims of political terrorism.' The resulting applause was deafening.⁶⁵

Still ruling by emergency decree, on October 6 Chancellor Brüning empowered the police to shut down 'dens of activities hostile to the state.' Grzesinski and Weiss immediately sent in their police to evict the S.A. and S.S. from the hostels that Goebbels had set up for them in Berlin, tossing the beds and furniture into the street. Hundreds of Nazis, already unemployed, now became homeless too. The steam-head of hatred slowly built up pressure.

To the authorities' distress Adolf Hitler now moved his political headquarters away from Munich—where a personal tragedy, the suicide of his niece Geli in his apartment, had deeply shocked him—to Berlin. Burying for ever the womanizing, indolent, procrastinating Hitler of old, he retained a suite of rooms in the Kaiserhof hotel, within leering distance of the Reich chancellery. Here he held court with his henchmen like Röhm, Hess, and Julius Schaub. Grzesinski and Weiss were shocked by their government's lack of dignity in tolerating this; their agents learned that Hitler was meeting millionaire businessmen including even Günther Quandt at the Kaiserhof, and that they were pouring money into the Nazi coffers having accepted that Brüning was not going to rescue Germany.⁶⁶

Oct

Scene

THE locals jostle and vie with each other for Hitler's ear. Göring, his political attaché in Berlin, is also overshadowed by tragedy, as his wife Carin has now contracted her final illness and returned to Stockholm with no hope of recovering. Goebbels tries to buy from the prosecutor's office the documents incriminating Röhm. Röhm, stung by Goebbels' campaign against him, tells Hitler that all Berlin is gossiping about Goebbels' affair with the former Mrs Quandt.⁶⁷ But this backfires on Röhm, as Goebbels now often hangs around the lobby of the Kaiserhof with Magda taking tea. Once they send young Harald Quandt, now nearly ten, upstairs to see the Führer wearing the little blue uniform Magda has sewn for him. Harald gives Hitler the appropriate salute and says that he feels twice as strong when wearing a uniform. Goebbels invites Hitler downstairs to meet Magda—the divorced wife of the

Scene

193

130 II: THE GAULEITER OF BERLIN

industrialist you saw earlier,' he adds. A stickler for etiquette, Hitler asks Göring whether there is any reason why he should not be seen with Magda. 'No,' admits Göring, 'but you can't be too careful with "Madame Pompadour."' The name means nothing to Hitler, and does not grasp that Magda is in a relationship with his propaganda chief.

Thus the three points of an extraordinary triangle converge—Hitler, Magda, and Goebbels. Over tea Magda, not quite thirty, and the first bereaved Hitler, twelve years her senior, feast their eyes on each other. To Hitler she looks uncannily like Geli⁽⁶⁰⁾ while Magda, imbued by time with Nazi lore, feels she is in the presence of a demi-god. He later, in his upstairs suite, Hitler remarks to his henchmen that in he believed he had found something almost divine. 'I thought the feelings were dead and buried,' he adds. 'But today these same feelings have suddenly overwhelmed me again.'

For an instant he seems to have fantasized about Magda; she told her mother that he had made cautious and discreet advances to her.⁷⁰ reverie lasts however only a few hours. After midnight he learns that Magda has casually invited Schaub, the S.S. commander Sepp Dietrich and his chauffeur back to her apartment for drinks; Dr Goebbels then shows up there, letting himself in with a key, and declares stiffly that is somewhat surprised to find them there at such a late hour. Hitler clearly astonished to hear this from them: Goebbels, that limping lieutenant, has won this Germanic beauty? He pulls a wry face and tries to laugh off his disappointment. 'It was just a brief relapse,' he confesses an aide.⁷¹

Carin Göring died early on October 17. Hitler took this fresh personal loss hard and again spoke wistfully to the Nazi economics adviser Otto Wagener about Magda Quandt. 'This woman,' he mused, 'might yet play a role in my life. . . . She could become a second Geli for me. a pity,' he continued, thinking out loud, 'that she is not married.' He worried about appearances. Wagener took the hint, and we have probably reliable account of what followed. That day, October 17, the next Hitler and Goebbels were both due to attend a rally by the SS at Brunswick. Wagener invited Magda to go in his large 100-horsepower Horch.⁷² On the drive over, Wagener stopped for a picnic and put unusual proposition to her: Hitler, he said, was a rare genius who needed a woman's gentle influence; she must be able to help the Führer to find himself as a human being—somebody to accompany him to the opera and to entertain him to tea with the finest porcelain. 'This woman could be you.'

'But I would have to be married to somebody,' she pointed out.

'Correct,' he said, and mentioned Goebbels. Magda was hesitant. 'for Adolf Hitler,' she bravely announced, 'I am willing to do anything.' She promised to keep Wagener informed.

It seems to have been an unusual bargain all round. Magda later told her sister-in-law Ello Quandt that Goebbels attached one condition to their marriage, if he was *quasi* to share her with Hitler, namely that

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Magda Quandt

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1931

THE STRANGER AND THE SHADOW 131

be allowed extra-marital adventures; a man of his vitality needed this emotional leeway, he argued.⁷³ Early in November she phoned Wagener to say that they would both be coming to Munich a few days later: 'I have come to keep my promise.' Over lunch with Hitler they announced their engagement and he attended their little hotel celebration afterwards. 'The mood was so carefree,' recalled Wagener, 'that I had the feeling that three people had at last found happiness.'

THE Reichstag was due to reconvene after its seven-month recess on October 13, 1931. On the tenth President von Hindenburg sent for Hitler to size him up. He was not impressed. On the following day, in an attempt to concert their opposition, Hitler chaired a meeting with the bourgeois opposition leaders at Bad Harzburg. The upshot was the formation of a 'Harzburg Front' against Brüning. On the fourteenth the Nazis re-entered the Reichstag, but only briefly because two days later they walked out again.

By the end of the year there were 5,660,000 registered unemployed—a desperate people turning to the Nazis for their salvation, and a regime determined to stay in office by hook or by crook. On December 8 Brüning issued still more emergency decrees, banning political uniforms and prohibiting all political assemblies until the new year. Two days later Hitler held court again at the Kaiserhof with Röhm, Hess, Ernst 'Putzi' Hanfstaengl, and Schaub; the next day police HQ learned that Hitler was conferring all morning with the Ruhr steel millionaires Albert Vögler and Fritz Thyssen, and planned to hold a press conference with American journalists. Grzesinski pleaded with Severing to ban at least the press conference as an 'illegal assembly,' or failing that to deport Hitler from Prussia as *persona non grata*: the Berlin police could then forcibly put him on the midday train to Munich. President von Hindenburg however disapproved—another sign that the Nazis were coming in from the cold.

HITLER had begun visiting Magda Quandt's apartment on Reichskanzler Platz more often than Göring's. Both Goebbels and Gregor Strasser welcomed this—the Görings, said Strasser, had always had a houseful of fortune-hunters hoping to meet the Führer. ('I myself get on quite well with Goebbels,' Strasser told Wagener.) With Carin now dead, Göring moved permanently into the Kaiserhof. Fleeing from the political atmosphere there, Hitler became a still more frequent visitor to Magda's household. She served her home-baked pastries to Hitler and fussed over him, while he relaxed and expatiated upon the cretins who claimed to admire the degenerate modern works of art. 'Dr Goebbels,' he said casually, 'I want you to think over how we're to stop this rot when we take over and you're in charge of all government propaganda.'

The Goebbels wedding was fixed for December 19, 1931. As a divorcee and convert to protestantism, Magda could not marry under the rites of the catholic church. Goebbels' plea to the bishop of Berlin for a waiver was denied. Marrying as a protestant, he would be excommunicated.

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Dec 19, 1931

132 II: THE GAULEITER OF BERLIN

'He thereupon saw no further reason to pay their church tax,' said Hitler years later, mocking the church's hypocrisy. 'But the church inform him that excommunication . . . did not affect the obligation to pay up before.'⁷⁴

Hitler acted as one witness, and General von Epp as the other. Si a Berlin wedding was out of the question—the communists would h raised mayhem—it was solemnized at Severin, the Quandt estate Mecklenburg. Quandt did not hear about this until afterwards; he stop~~ped~~ paying alimony forthwith.⁷⁵ The village notary of Goldenbow performed the legal ceremony, then Dr Wenzel, a pastor from Berlin, officiated the protestant ceremony in the chapel at nearby Frauenmark; a swast banner draped the altar.⁷⁶ Magda's mother came, but not her father, w disapproved of Goebbels; she had stitched together a little brown S uniform for her son Harald to wear as a pageboy. 'We accept the obligat to bring up our children in the evangelical-lutheran faith,' the cou affirmed.⁷⁷

As for Joseph Goebbels, if Magda had looked closely, she would h seen that her new husband was wearing a gold tiepin shaped like a wo man's head—a gift, he had once told a friend, from a girl he had become v fond of at university.⁷⁸

17: The Man of Tomorrow

LEAVING Magda alone, Dr Goebbels spent Christmas Eve 1931 with the S.A. Nationwide, the party now had over eight hundred thousand members. Two years later he published a popular edition of his diaries for the coming months entitled *From the Kaiserhof to the Reich Chancellery*. The book would sell half a million copies by 1939.¹

Textual comparison with the handwritten original, which has survived on Nazi microfiches in Moscow,² shows that Goebbels edited them less severely than his critics believed. There are the usual exaggerations. The diary's twenty thousand people listening to him speak in Leipzig become '30,000' in *Kaiserhof*.³ His meetings are always 'overflowing,' and with the right class of people, 'almost all artisans';⁴ 'virtually only workers' in Essen, and a Sport Palace 'brimming with workers' in Berlin.⁵ 'He who has the working man,' he pronounces, 'has the people.' He learns more, so he writes, from a sleeping-car conductor than from far more august gentlemen.⁶ The published diary also treats President von Hindenburg with far greater respect ('this venerable figure' and 'the grand old man')⁷ than does the original handwritten text.

As for Hitler, the image that Goebbels offers readers of his book is of a clear-thinking, resolute, pragmatic Führer who never hesitates unless for tactical advantage. 'He has the tougher nerves and the greater staying power,' writes Goebbels in his book.⁸ Banished from the printed page is the image of Hitler Cunctator, the prevaricating Munich coffeeshop demagogue familiar from the handwritten diaries of previous years. 'The Führer is the best raconteur I know,' he writes.⁹ 'Wonderful,' he writes of Hitler's final appointment as chancellor, 'how simple the Führer is in his greatness, and how great in his simplicity.'¹⁰

In editing *Kaiserhof* he has however settled a few old scores. Gregor Strasser lurks through his apparently clairvoyant essay as a sinister figure unrecognizable as the man of bonhomie and talent of whom Goebbels has in fact written so recently in the diary. 'There is one man in the organization trusted by nobody,' he thunders in *Kaiserhof*. 'And this man's name is Gregor Strasser!'¹¹ Unlike the real man, the book's Strasser is a boring and ineffective speaker, 'the one of our number whom our opponents most love—which tells strongly against him.'¹² Hermann Göring too is barely recognizable. Gone are the references to his morphine addiction; no longer a 'mound of frozen crap,' Göring is a massive and powerful speaker against defense minister Wilhelm Groener.¹³ In

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134 II: THE GAULEITER OF BERLIN

one handwritten entry he has called Göring an arch prig (*urpampig*); published entry reads, 'I find myself agreeing with Goering [*sic*] on fundamental and tactical issues'.¹⁴ The difference is that by 1934, year of publication, Göring has become a very dangerous man indeed to cross.

The published diary represents its author, Goebbels, as the comrade whom Hitler trusts and regularly consults: two men sitting spiders in the center of the Kaiserhof web, watching as their pawns move to topple first Groener, then Brüning himself in the late spring of 1932. There is no trace in it of the depression that laid the gauleiter low a year before, and only the most antiseptic glimpses of his private life. The book records the gau's crippling financial plight,¹⁷ but suppresses any reference to the excesses which the private diary reveals—for instance his craze for the latest automobiles. On May 22 the diary notes, "gentlemen from Mercedes come to beg forgiveness. I am to get a coachwork [for the Opel Nuremberg] and a new Mercedes open top. Now, that's talking!"¹⁸

The published text also casts a discreet veil over Hitler's private life. On the anniversary of Geli's suicide, Hitler tearfully visits her grave in Vienna.¹⁹ In *Kaiserhof* however he is shown only as driving there for a private visit. There is more: The real diary shows that contrary to popular belief Miss Eva Braun, the blonde laboratory assistant of Hitler's photographer, did not step straight into Geli's shoes, but that a *Fräulein* Weinrich briefly claimed Hitler's attentions first. 'So that's Hitler's girl,' notes Goebbels. 'Poor taste. Glum girl. Moist hands. Brr!' He finds Hitler lunching with Hitler at the Osteria restaurant the next day. 'Pig stuff,' Goebbels decides, before allowing more charitably: 'How great Hitler is longing for a woman must be!' He wondered what his chief saw in this little fibbertigibbet—he ought to find a more respectable lady friend. There is not even a hint of this in the published *Kaiserhof* of course.

NINETEEN thirty-two would be a year of elections—one presidential, one Reichstag, and five provincial. In most the National Socialists would increase their vote. Goebbels brought the national propaganda directorate permanently to Berlin from March 1, and campaigned tirelessly. He had a vast following in the capital. The regime could no longer ignore the Nazis. Brüning actually invited Hitler for talks about extending Hindenburg's term of office.²¹ After discussing it with his partners in the Harzburg Front, Hitler published his refusal in the *Völkischer Beobachter*, insisting on a new presidential election.²²

To Brüning's embarrassment, deputy police chief 'Isidor' Weiss called this moment to ban *Angriff* for the tenth time in a year, for inciting contempt of the Jews—in 1932 there were 172,672 Jews among Berlin's 4,024,165 population.²³ On January 8 he shut down a meeting at Sport Palace just as Goebbels had begun speaking to fifteen thousand people, for inciting contempt of Weiss in particular.²⁴ Enraged by Goebbels' behavior in court two weeks later during the Helldorff ap-

1932

hearing—he had demanded that the police informant testify in open court—Weiss slapped a fresh three-week gag on the gauleiter.²⁵ Weiss also telexed to every provincial governor in Germany: 'National Socialist deputy Dr Göbbels [*sic*] forbidden to speak here. Meetings only under proviso that G is not speaker. POLICE PRESIDENT BERLIN.'²⁶

At the next few meetings organizers read out messages from Goebbels, until the police banned these too. The fight continued. On legal advice—and by now Goebbels was surrounded by eager lawyers willing to help—he deeded his personal library to a third person in case Weiss seized it on the pretext that it served the purposes of spreading revolution.

The tide of political violence was rising. Eighty-six Nazis were murdered during 1932; in twelve months Goebbels alone lost seven men, and the police seldom caught the murderers. The killing of fifteen-year-old Herbert Norkus was particularly nasty. He and five pals had been distributing leaflets early one Sunday morning when they were overwhelmed by communists. The body of Norkus, son of a working-class Nazi from Plötzensee, was found in the entrance hall of No. 4 Zwingli Strasse, where he had bled to death from six stab wounds. Goebbels personally inspected the scene with its twenty-yard trail of dried blood and the one bloody handprint on the whitewashed wall. After going on to the morgue he wrote these words in his newspaper: 'There in the bleak gray twilight a yellowing childish face stares with half-open, empty eyes. The delicate features have been trampled to a bloody pulp.'²⁷ The next day he buried the artist Professor Ernst Schwarz, an S.A. officer gunned down in a communist ambush a week before.²⁸

ONE evening Dr Goebbels returned home excited, limped up and down chain-smoking for a while, then told Magda he had had a splendid idea. 'Hitler himself must stand for president,' he said. Hitler however proved unexpectedly difficult to persuade: he wanted the opposition to come out with their candidates before making up his own mind. Still delaying his decision, on February 9 Hitler reviewed fifteen thousand of Röhm's stormtroopers in the Sport Palace. Goebbels enthused, 'Chief of Staff Röhm has pulled off a miracle.' This embarrassing laudatio appeared only in the first edition of *Kaiserhof*, and was struck out of all editions published after June 1934.²⁹

Police chief Grzesinski gagged at the prospect of Hitler, his arch enemy, becoming president. This centurion of social democracy made little pretense of impartiality: 'How shameful it is,' he declared in Leipzig, 'that millions of Germans are trotting along behind a foreigner. . . . How shameful that this foreigner, Hitler, not only conducts serious talks with the government on foreign affairs, but is able to speak to foreign press representatives about Germany's future and about Germany's foreign interests without somebody seeing him off with a dog-whip.'³⁰ Dr Goebbels made hay with that remark.³¹ In *Angriff* he pointed out how often Grzesinski had banned Nazis for precisely the same kind of incitement to violence.³² 'Let's see,' he crowed in *Kaiserhof*, published when he

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Fehr. March 23, 1932

136 II: THE GAULEITER OF BERLIN

already knew the answer, 'which of us gets seen off with a dog-whip of Germany.'³³

Hindenburg announced on February 15 that he intended to stand again. Taking Hitler's decision for granted, Goebbels began designing election posters with punchy slogans like *Schluss jetzt!*—'Time's up! Hitler was still undecided. Goebbels decided to present him with a *accompli*, subjecting him to the pressure of public acclaim. To a cheering Sport Palace audience on February 22, Goebbels simply announced: 'Hitler *would* stand for president.'³⁵ Hitler's HQ in Munich was horrified and issued an immediate embargo to the Party newspaper, forbidding them to print Goebbels' announcement.³⁶ Hitler had no choice but to agree to stand. Writing in *Kaiserhof* two years later, Goebbels claimed that Hitler had phoned him after the meeting to express his delight that the announcement had gone down so well.³⁷

Whatever the truth of this self-serving statement, on February 22, speaking in a Reichstag building surrounded by riot police, Goebbels announced the election date as March 13. After that, speaking on behalf of the Nazis, Dr Goebbels launched into an hour-long assault on Brüning, seated stony faced and with arms folded near him. In one by he said, the police had banned *Angriff* twelve times; eight times the courts had ruled these bans illegal. 'The *Illustrierte Beobachter*,' he said, 'picture magazine of the National Socialist movement, has today been banned until March 13—i.e. for the whole of the election period.' In the last three months twenty-four S.A. men had been murdered ('Probably by other Nazis,' yelled a Social Democrat) and now their police chief was talking of whipping Hitler out of Germany. No foreign power, he declared, was willing to sign treaties with Brüning—'Because they know Mr Reich Chancellor, that you are the Man of Yesteryear, and that the Man of Tomorrow is coming.'

To a barrage of abuse from the left, Goebbels doggedly waded into Hindenburg's reputation. '*Lauded by the Berlin gutter press, feted by the Party of Deserters*—' he declaimed, flinging out a demagogic arm toward the social democrat benches. The rest of his words were lost in the hubbub of outrage that his taunt provoked.³⁸

Furiously clanging his bell the Speaker called for silence. 'Dr Goebbels,' he charged, 'you have named one of the parties present in the House the "Party of Deserters" ...'

The Social Democrats screeched at Goebbels, 'Who deserted? Who were you!!' One of them shouted, 'You weren't at the front for even one day!' Amid mounting hubbub the communist bloc leader Ernst Thälmer mocked, 'Let war veteran Goebbels speak.' But the Social Democrats were now hysterical. 'We were at the front!' 'He was the dodger!' 'Withdraw!' 'Behold Goebbels, the political cripple!'

Barely pausing to draw breath Goebbels continued: 'The Jews of the Berlin gutter press have held the field marshal on high. These are the same Jews and Social Democrats [shouts of 'Sit down!'] and 'Time's up!' who dumped buckets of mockery and scorn on the field marshal in 19

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March 9, 1932

'Sit down! Sit down!' roared the Social Democrats. 'We're not going to be insulted by dodgers!'

The Speaker capitulated, and ordered Goebbels out of the chamber. Gregor Strasser leaped to his defense, pointing out that the gauleiter had not accused any particular party by name. 'When he said "Party of Deserters" only the Social Democrats felt the hat fitted!'³⁹

Returning to the attack the next day Goebbels complained that the illegal and unjust bans on *Angriff* had cost the newspaper 180,000 marks already. As for the opposition's specious allegations that he had just slandered Hindenburg as a 'deserter,' he retaliated by reading out devastating passages from press clippings in his confidential archives, reporting what the Social Democrat organ *Vorwärts*, the *Berliner Morgenzeitung*, the *Berliner Morgenpost*, and Carl Severing himself had written about the field marshal during the previous presidential election campaign. In a brutal closing tirade he offered a string of definitions for the Nazi word *System*, ending with this one: 'Where criticizing the Republic lands you in jail, but slandering and belittling the entire German people is rewarded by the highest distinctions!' He cried, 'That is why in the three weeks now beginning, one battle-cry will sound throughout Germany: Time's up, Away with the *System* . . . the *System* that Brüning and his Cabinet represent!' As screams of abuse erupted from the left, Goebbels taunted them: 'Well may you laugh and scoff. Events will prove us right. We shall meet again, on March the thirteenth, at Philippi.'⁴⁰

Das System

Waging an election campaign of dubious probity Brüning's officials confiscated the *Völkischer Beobachter* and banned *Angriff* yet again, for inciting contempt of the Republic. But the Nazis had poster power. Kampmann, now Goebbels' gau propaganda chief, plastered the circular Litfass advertisement pillars on street corners with huge placards: S.A. men stood guard on each site, and Nazi speakers harangued the crowds that gathered around them.⁴¹ Outsized pictorial posters like Schweitzer's 'A Man Breaks his Chains' adorned the façades of prominent buildings such as the Café Josty on Potsdamer Platz. Goebbels recorded on discs a short speech, cleverly structured so that its real propaganda message was not at first evident, and manufactured fifty thousand cardboard copies of this little recording costing only three pfennigs each for Nazis to mail to their marxist opponents.⁴² In 1930 he had seen an inspiring film of Mussolini speaking; the Herold film company now produced a ten-minute film of Goebbels speaking, to be shown each night in town squares throughout Germany.⁴³ Somebody—in the Reichstag the taunt was always 'Thyssen!'—must have topped up Goebbels' funds because he would spend two hundred thousand marks on propaganda for this presidential campaign.⁴⁴

With *Angriff* already banned, the government now banned the rest of his posters and leaflets.⁴⁵ Goebbels' demands that Hitler be allowed broadcasting time like Hindenburg were refused.⁴⁶ On March 9, with four days to go, he addressed eighty thousand people in Berlin's Lustgarten park. The press published doctored photographs to suggest only a

sparse attendance.⁴⁷ Two days later Grzesinski sent police to raid his again. The next day Goebbels addressed an election-eve rally at the S Palace.⁴⁸ After that he gathered his officials at his apartment to await first results. By ten P.M. it was clear that, while eleven million votes had been cast for Hitler, Hindenburg was far ahead—indeed, only hundred thousand votes short of an absolute majority.⁴⁹ Goebbels, coming his dejection, issued these guidelines to all gauleiters that Sunday: 'The N.S.D.A.P. has won an unparalleled victory in the election round. In one and a half years the Party has succeeded in almost doubling its vote.'

Their task now would be to win 2.5 million more voters for the party. Goebbels ordered the Nazi gauleiters to concentrate their scarce resources on the most promising sections of those who had not voted for them. Thus they must tell the bourgeois voters what to expect if Hindenburg was re-elected: The stopping of pensions, huge tax burdens and renewed inflation, as well as further territorial encroachment on Poland and Lithuania, and civil war with the communists.⁵⁰

Refusing even to look at the gloating headlines of the 'Judenpreis' that Monday morning, Goebbels flew down to Munich with Kampfer for a campaign conference with Hitler. The second round would be held on April 10. Tossing more dirty-trick spanners into the Nazi wheel, Brüning ordered virtually simultaneous provincial elections for Prussia, Anhalt, Württemberg, and Bavaria. He also decreed an electioneering moratorium until after Easter. 'We're fighting a war,' snarled Goebbels 'but there's to be no shooting for three weeks!' Carl Severing joined the spanner-tossing, arresting scores of Goebbels' Berlin officials mostly trumped-up charges, while Grzesinski and Weiss had their police search for evidence that would justify an outright ban on the S.A.⁵¹

Goebbels responded with innovative electioneering techniques as the brief but unequal battle was rejoined. He had originally planned to issue four pictorial and sixteen text posters to be released day by day from March 22 onward.⁵² The moratorium knocked that plan on its head. Hitler again appealed to the radio stations to allow him air time but again Brüning permitted only Hindenburg to get near the microphone.⁵³ The campaign got dirty on both sides. Hitler's opponents distributed leaflets in old people's homes warning that he would take away their pensions and insist on compulsory euthanasia at sixty; other elections 'lies' against which Goebbels warned the other gauleiters in a circular were that the Nazis would bring war, inflation, expropriation, destruction of the unions, dissolution of the civil service, disemancipation of workers, forced labour, civil war, and the renunciation of all claims to the South Tyrol, East Prussia, and Alsace-Lorraine.⁵⁴ (With the passage of time about three quarters of these 'lies' would come true.)

In the same circular Goebbels suggested that Hindenburg was benefiting from the emotional female vote ('fear of war') and from the servants' anxieties about their future. The gauleiters had to concentrate on this 'Hindenburg front'—they must ask the butchers, bakers, :

innkeepers *why* they had voted for the field marshal, and then tailor their own propaganda accordingly. (This field-operational analysis would become a hallmark of Goebbels' propaganda strategy.) He suggested they send groups of girl members into the old folks' homes to read to them, and the bands of the S.A. and S.S. to serenade them. He hatched a secret plan to triple the print-run of all Nazi newspapers for election week, the additional copies being sent free to all Hindenburg voters. The *Völkischer Beobachter* alone should send out 800,000 free copies each day.

As for Hitler, Goebbels brought in air power: Flying from city to city in his own plane D-1720 Hitler would address three or four huge meetings a day in twenty-one cities beginning on April 3, tackling a new enemy 'lie' each day. Goebbels printed four pictorial posters, targeting the farming community, city dwellers, women, and vested interests.⁵⁵ A glossy photogravure magazine illustrated with pictures of the Führer would round off his campaign package. True, its title, *Flamethrower*, was unlikely to attract the female fear-of-war vote—but he still had a lot to learn about them.

Then the election got dirtier. The government banned Goebbels' free-newspaper stunt. Infuriatingly, their opponents obtained details of Hitler's lavish Kaiserhof expenses.⁵⁶ Goebbels called the bill a forgery.⁵⁷ He retaliated by claiming to have annihilating material on Severing's 'womanizing,' but declared that, after consulting with the Führer, they would not release it. In fact neither he nor Hitler was in a strong position to scold their opponents on this score.

The moratorium ended on Sunday April 3. While Hitler set out by plane, Goebbels spoke three times that day at Wiesbaden, then at Frankfurt. On the fourth he and Hitler addressed 150,000 people in the Berlin Lustgarten, then fifty thousand more in Potsdam. In Goebbels' absence police chief Grzesinski suddenly ordered the gau HQ in Hedemann Strasse padlocked, and banned the election posters that Goebbels had designed for the upcoming Prussian campaign.⁵⁸

VOTING was on April 10, 1932. Though again failing to defeat Hindenburg, Hitler now clearly emerged as a statesman of equivalent stature. His vote increased to 13,418,547 (Hindenburg won with 19,359,983 votes). The Nazi vote in Berlin had grown by two hundred thousand, attracting thirty-one percent of the vote in the capital as compared with 36.8 percent nationwide. The communist won only 3,706,759. Seen in this light, Goebbels should have been delighted; but in the privacy of his apartment he made no secret of his disappointment. According to her mother, Magda chose this moment to reveal that she was four months pregnant. Any elation at this was tempered by the announcement that the defense minister Groener had banned the S.A. and S.S. nationwide and ordered their immediate dissolution.⁵⁹

Polling in Prussia, the next round of elections, would be on April 24. Goebbels now directed his propaganda venom at Otto Braun and Carl Severing, and their police minions Grzesinski and 'Isidor' Weiss.⁶⁰ He

1932

140 II: THE GAULEITER OF BERLIN

devised more new techniques, including loudspeaker trucks ill equipped for broadcasting the Horst Wessel anthem. One stunt tickled the fancy of the international press: His posters cheekily announced a public debate with Chancellor Brüning in the Sport Palace. In fact he had obtained recordings of a recent Brüning speech in Königsberg, from which he played extracts to his audience, together with his own devastating reply. Brüning's humorless response was to sue Goebbels for infringing copyright in his intellectual property.⁶¹ After dropping dark hints that he had some dirt on Brüning, he detected a softening in Brüning's *Vorwärts* line. Struggling with 'flu and a 40°C fever he addressed a hundred thousand people in the Lustgarten. On election eve one of his men was shot dead with a bullet between the eyes. The next day he saw every swastika flag in Prussia draped in mourning.

These were the Goebbels methods, and thanks to them the Nazis increased their numbers in the Prussian parliament from six seats to twenty-four. With 38.3 percent of the votes they were the strongest party. In Bavaria meanwhile the Nazis had swollen from nine seats to forty-three. In Württemberg from one to fifty-one, and in Anhalt from one to fifteen.

In Anhalt Germany's first Nazi prime minister was appointed. Elsewhere, Brüning's allies were still strong enough to form a coalition against the Nazis and stay in power.

'We've got to get into power sooner or later,' wrote Goebbels with understandable frustration at this outcome. 'Otherwise all these electoral victories will be the death of us.'⁶²

1932

18: Follow that Man

FOR THE next few months Hitler would spend more time in Berlin than in Munich, wheeling and dealing in tandem with Göring in a persistent effort to cover the last hundred yards to power. Goebbels did what he could to undermine Hitler's trust in Göring. When the aviator started an affair with blonde actress Emmy Sonnemann, a married woman, he lost no time in telling Hitler.¹ In consequence, Hitler spent more time with the Goebbelses. In any case, he was almost pathological about being recognized in the capital. He would hide his face when the lights came on in movie theaters; one evening, the Goebbelses were out when Hitler returned to Reichskanzler Platz and he had to wait outside. He asked Darré to stand between him and the street. 'Hitler remained standing,' said Darré, 'in the corner of the doorway with his face turned toward the house until Dr Goebbels got back.'²

The Center party wooed Hitler the most persistently, stating as their only condition that he must accept a junior role. There were those, Gregor Strasser among them, who felt strongly that half a loaf was better than no bread. But Goebbels insisted that they hold out for absolute power. 'Either—or,' he wrote: 'Power, or opposition.'³

His published diary contains only hints at the part in fact played by Franz von Papen and General Kurt von Schleicher in bringing about the demise of the System. Missing from Kaiserhof too is the juicy scandal caused when a Munich newspaper published Röhm's homosexual love-letters.⁴ Goebbels was not alone in his perplexity at Hitler's indulgence of such perversions.

Goebbels' wonder.

BY 1932 Goebbels' fame was spreading beyond Germany's frontiers. The distinguished American journalist H. R. Knickerbocker, writing from Berlin for the New York *Evening Post*, singled him out as the 'greatest master of public management' that Europe had ever known. To Goebbels, he wrote, went all the credit for Hitler's election successes. 'He is the best journalist in the party, and the best orator.' His billboards were masterpieces of election psychology.⁶

Goebbels had lost his appeal against the two month sentence for libeling Dr Weiss, and a pro forma warrant had been issued on February 11; on the twentieth Dr Bernhard Weiss was informed that the sentence could be enforced as soon as Goebbels lost his immunity.⁷ Meanwhile, on April 25 supreme court officials from Leipzig served another forty-

scene

Post. ?

scene

It is not with him constantly.

In effect, I had

Welcome

ding. But I could not give him more. He would give me completely + I would have to wait that

the more she, surely

May 1, 1932

142 II: THE GAULEITER OF BERLIN

page indictment on Goebbels, this time for high treason. This document too he shrugged off.⁸

The maneuvering between the Nazis and a camarilla of army officials jointly and severally eager for power, had begun. Goebbels' diaries show that Hitler had entrusted the backstage negotiations to Röhm, Göring and Frick, while General von Schleicher operated through his colleague Werner Count von Alvensleben, whom Goebbels identified only in an unpublished version of his diary.⁹ As the regime's position weakened May 1932 Hitler and Goebbels, who had been conferring in Munich, hurried back to Berlin. A minister resigned and Hitler, living in the Kaiserhof or with the Goebbelses, again launched into negotiations with Schleicher's and Hindenburg's emissaries. Power seemed so near to Nazi leaders, and yet so unattainable. When the Reichstag debate resumed, Göring and Strasser spearheaded the attack on Brüning's ruinous financial policies. Brüning survived the Nazi motion of no confidence, this time by 286 votes to 259. The gap was narrowing all the time.

12. The next day, May 12, saw scandalous scenes in the Reichstag. All Nazi deputies roughed up an opponent, Dr Bernhard Weiss and police officers stormed in and arrested several of them. Goebbels was thrilled at 'Isidor's' blunder in violating the sovereignty of their parliament. The entire press echoed him. Groener resigned as defense minister. The police arrested Strasser that night on his train heading back to Munich, and Weiss issued yet another libel writ against Goebbels insulting him as a Jew.¹⁰ Clinging grimly to the tattered remnants of office, Brüning still refused to resign, instead adjourning the Reichstag until June. Hitler was determined to force a new election, so that his party could bring its now massive voting strength to bear.

For all his public triumphs, Goebbels' finances at this time were on a knife-edge. *Angriff* was having to pay off his costs in one libel action by monthly installments of twenty marks. His lawyer tried to get the balance of 598 marks annulled.¹¹ His accountant declared a tax demand of 5 marks for 1931 to be totally beyond his means, and asked if he could pay one hundred marks a month; Goebbels indignantly penciled in the margin, 'Pay—from what?'¹² Magda's handsome alimony payments from Quandt had ended of course with her new marriage.

May 22. Goebbels evidently refused however to touch the colossal funds that he raised for the election campaigns. After his private diary recorded May 22 a visit from some gentlemen from Mercedes, the gau HQ was suddenly awash with funds. Magda, now in her fifth month of pregnancy, rented a little cottage in the middle of an orchard at Caputh, near Gatow on Lake Schwielow. In this idyllic setting they spent their summer nights while frogs bleeped and swallows flitted through their open bedroom windows.¹³

30. AFTER Dr Brüning resigned on May 30, 1932, the clever, foxy career politician Franz von Papen was appointed interim chancellor. The election

July 30, 1932

FOLLOW THAT MAN 143

tion was set down for the last day of July. Goebbels called his staff out to a council of war.¹⁴

Once again it was Goebbels who masterminded the nationwide campaign, from Hitler's fifty-city aerial tour of Germany right down to the tiniest personal details like obtaining the names of eight Berlin Nazis in prison and in hospital and dividing between them the latest meager royalty check from his book *The Unknown S.A. Man* 'as a small token,' he wrote them, 'of recognition.'¹⁵

He did not intend to allow 'Isidor' to disrupt this campaign and started a drive to get him and Grzesinski sacked. Papen had appointed a bumbling weakling, Baron von Gayl, as minister of the interior. Hitler easily persuaded him to lift the eight-week-old ban on the S.A. and S.S. and Goebbels publicly called on Gayl to 'get rid of Messrs Grzesinski and Weiss' as well.¹⁶ Under Nazi pressure Papen repealed virtually all the bans. A Nazi was appointed Speaker of the Prussian parliament: under his diktat, this body set up a formal commission of inquiry into Weiss's activities. 'Revenge is a repast best served up cold,' wrote Goebbels yet again. Weiss responded by banning *Angriff* for five days.¹⁷

A month remained before the election day. This time the Nazis enjoyed limited access to the air waves.¹⁸ Goebbels scripted a broadcast on 'National character as a basis for national culture.' It was stripped of its venom however by the radio censors before he could broadcast it.¹⁹ The final list of Nazi candidates for Berlin and Potsdam again poorly justified the claim to be a workers' party: Of the forty-one local names, six were office workers, five businessmen, two former police officers, and among the rest a civil servant, teacher, bookseller, pharmacist, tailor, librarian, and bank clerk; only five were truly working class.²⁰ All of these candidates, including Goebbels himself, had to sign a five-point declaration for Hitler's personal files, of which the first two points read as follows:

1. I swear that I have no links or relations with the Jews;
2. I swear that I hold no directorships in banks or other corporations.²¹

With the irksome ban on the S.A. lifted by the obliging Franz von Papen, the Brownshirt armies marched again. For two hours twenty thousand marched past Goebbels and Strasser in Dessau on July 3. As he arrived in Hagen on the twelfth the communists ambushed his car. Clutching a pistol, he signaled his chauffeur to put his foot down and plow through the mob. After that the left signaled his car's number ahead to every town. In Mönchen-Gladbach the communists passed out leaflets stating that he was not to escape alive; no idle threat, because the tide of violence was in full flood.²² Only a few days earlier he had buried S.A. Scharführer Helmut Köster of No. 24 Sturm; ten thousand people had packed the graveyard. In Wedding the communists gunned down S.A. man Hans Steinberg. In the fifty days up to July 20 Prussia saw 461 political clashes, resulting in eighty-two deaths on all sides; in the last two weeks of the campaign alone, thirty-two Nazis were killed. On July 17 communist

July 20, 1932

gunmen opened fire on a marching S.A. column in Altona, Hamburg, leaving nineteen dead and sixty injured.²³

SUDDENLY everything tilted in the Nazis' favor. General von Schleicher agreed to back a putsch against Prussia. Meeting with Göring, Röhl and Goebbels in Cottbus two days after the Altona blood bath, Hindenburg announced to them that they were going to appoint a 'commissar for interior' in Prussia; Carl Severing, the incumbent minister of the interior, huffed that he would yield only to *force majeure*. 'A touch on the nose sufficed,' mocked Goebbels in *Kaiserhof*.²⁴ Severing's humiliation was followed by President von Hindenburg signing a decree appointing Papen himself as Reich commissar in Prussia, displacing the leftist prime minister Otto Braun. When Braun squealed, Hindenburg—on Schleicher's advice—called in the army. At 11:20 A.M. on July 20 General Gerd Rundstedt, the garrison commander, phoned police chief Grzesinski to word that he was imposing a state of emergency: His orders were to replace Grzesinski with the police chief of Essen. Dr Bernhard Weiss was to be summarily dismissed as well. The army sent in its officers at five thirty P.M. to arrest Grzesinski and Weiss.²⁵ As they were driven away from their police HQ at Alexander Platz in an army Mercedes, Weiss had no time even to gather up his bowler hat and pince-nez.²⁶

The sheer suddenness of it all took Goebbels' breath away. It was the end of an era. The Nazis had Papen eating out of their hand. He appointed 'reliable' police chiefs and civil governors (Regierungspräsidenten) throughout Prussia. He banned the newspapers that had been the bane of Goebbels' life such as the *Acht-Uhr Abendblatt*.

All the fetters thus came off in the last eleven days of Nazi campaigning. In the city's Grunewald stadium Karl Hanke organized the biggest open air rally yet for Hitler. It was a boiling-hot day until evening when the heavens opened and the rains drenched the 120,000 people gathered to hear him. But nobody left—'A sign,' in Kampmann's view, 'of how once Red Berlin had come around, thanks to Dr Goebbels' propaganda. A mighty cheer went up as Goebbels remarked that even these rains had deterred nobody.'²⁷

He was in Munich when the election results were announced. The Nazis had attracted nearly fourteen million votes, entitling them to 23 seats in the Reichstag. They were now far the largest single party, once again the Center party, with seventy-six seats, held the balance. Again Goebbels advised Hitler to hold out for absolute power, to shun any compromise. 'Tolerance will be the death of us,' he argued. Vacationing briefly with him at Tegernsee, Hitler agonized over his next step—'balking,' jotted Goebbels in his diary, 'at the really big decision. In *Kaiserhof* he softened this criticism by applying it to the party as a whole, rather than its Führer.

Leaving Goebbels in Bavaria, Hitler set off for Berlin on August 1, 1932 to state his demands to Hindenburg: he wanted to be chancellor with Frick as minister of the interior, Strasser as minister of labor

July 1, 1932

Goebbels as minister of public education (meaning propaganda), and Göring as aviation minister.²⁸ He returned south on the sixth. Up at his Obersalzberg mountain home he predicted to Goebbels that they would be taking office in a week's time, with Hitler as both chancellor and prime minister of Prussia, Strasser as minister of the interior, and Goebbels acting as minister of culture in Prussia and minister of education in the Reich. 'A Cabinet of real men,' approved Goebbels. 'We shall never give up power. They'll have to carry us out feet first. This is going to be a total solution.'

He stayed for the next five days at Hitler's side, nervous in case somebody talked the Führer into making other dispositions. In Berlin the S.A. under their bullying commander Helldorff had already begun jostling for power. While Göring conducted the political negotiations, Ernst Röhm drew his S.A. army up around the capital to exert a visible and unsubtle pressure on the chancellor Papen. Goebbels was bullish about the outcome of the talks, and stayed up until four A.M. one night discussing with Hitler the structure of his new ministry. Hitler promised him he would be running education, films, radio, theater, and propaganda; as if these were not portfolios enough, Goebbels decided to retain his position as the party's gauleiter of Berlin and as Reichsleiter in charge of its national propaganda. (All of these ambitions remained pipedreams, and nothing about them appeared in *Kaiserhof*.)²⁹ Daimler-Benz's general manager³⁰ came to talk automobiles, and for a day visions of newer and even bigger cars danced in the Nazi leaders' heads. But then Schleicher's man Alvensleben phoned with news that the regime was still holding out for a horse-trade. Hitler told him that he was not interested in compromises—'A total solution,' as Goebbels put it, 'or no dice.'³¹

Not all the Nazis agreed with Hitler's unrelenting stance. The regime spread rumors that a split was beginning to show in their ranks, and even that Goebbels and Strasser were in favor of half-measures. Hitler published a communiqué denying it.³² He left for Berlin with Goebbels. Here unsatisfactory news waited for them: Papen was still flatly against Hitler becoming chancellor; Röhm and Schleicher were trying to talk him round, without much success. Pacing the verandah of the Goebbelses summer house at Caputh, Hitler discussed this turn of events. They agreed that if the Führer accepted the vice-chancellorship that was on offer, this would saddle the Nazi party for all time with a share of the blame for Papen's failure. In the government quarter at midday on August 13 both Schleicher and Papen urged him to accept. Hitler refused, and Goebbels had to back him.³³ Later Hitler took Frick and Röhm over to see the president; he again left empty-handed. Frustrated and angry, the Nazi leaders gathered at Goebbels' apartment. Typewriters rattled out communiqués. The S.A. commanders were straining at the bit, they wanted action. Together with Röhm, Hitler briefed them to toe the line. He departed for Bavaria, leaving Goebbels in Berlin.

It was a totally unexpected impasse. The Nazis were the largest party: They had followed the path of legality until now, yet the *System* was

Aug 30, 1932

thwarting them once more. Goebbels consoled his embittered lieutenant and went on vacation to Heiligendamm. The millionaire banker E. Georg von Stauss of the Deutsche Bank invited him over to his yacht.³⁴ But Goebbels' mind was in a turmoil. He feared that the Nazi share of the vote had peaked, and might now rapidly decline.

The Reichstag resumed on August 30. Its members elected Hermann Göring as Speaker, a powerful position indeed. Göring invited Hitler, Röhm, and Goebbels up to his luxurious new apartment on Kaiserdamm to discuss tactics.³⁵ They agreed that at the very next Reichstag session on September 12 they must force an immediate dissolution. The election would be held on November 6. The party was now in a precarious position, sliding in the polls and with its campaign coffers dangerously low. Goebbels ordered *Angriff* to appear twice daily instead of once.

He organized a consumer boycott of opposition newspapers. He had no mercy on them. When a newspaper impugned Magda's honor he sent an S.S. officer to treat the journalist concerned with a riding whip; in the Prussian style, the S.S. man left his visiting card on the bleeding forehead. *see*

Magda had given birth to their first child on September 1, 1932. She had hoped for a boy to call Hellmut, to fill the hole left in her heart by her stepson's tragic death in Paris years before. But it was a girl, 'Hellmut' became Helga. The infant's nocturnal wails kept the household awake. Goebbels, a novice in the art of parenthood, complained unforgettingly and left Magda in tears.³⁶ *li*

COUNT von Helldorff took the breakdown of negotiations particularly hard. 'He's only tough,' observed Goebbels shrewdly, 'when the going is good.'³⁷

He moved his gau HQ for one last time, to a building in Voss Street barely three hundred yards from the Reich chancellery. He had come a long way since the 'opium den' six years before. He began planning ahead, listing whom he would need to take over the radio system. Hitler again flew a whistlestop tour of fifty cities. Goebbels followed in an open plane, his face anesthetized with cold. When his graphic artist Schweitzer ('Mjölnir') showed him his latest poster designs, he felt that his old friend was running out of steam—but then so was everybody.

The Goebbels Diary for the last weeks before the November 19 election lacked the sense of urgency and intrigue that had characterized it in July and August. Only rarely did anything of the old fun element surface in this campaign. He ordered the marxist districts plastered with stickers reading simply 'VOTE LIST 1 AGAIN' ('without stating which party that is'): The less sophisticated would assume that List 1 was the Red Party. He lured the German National party (D.N.V.P.) into accepting a public debate with him: In the hall the opponents provided him with only two hundred tickets, an inconvenience which Goebbels circumvented with the aid of *Angriff's* printers, who turned out two thousand more. When his opponents arrived, they found his men had taken over most of the hall.³⁹ *Nov*

Nov 9, 1932

On October 20 he ordered the Jewish problem placed more firmly to the forefront—citing Papen's Jewish adviser Jakob Goldschmidt as a case in point.⁴⁰ He also ordered gau officials to start systematic rumors that Hindenburg had already written off Papen. After quoting with perverse relish from the D.N.V.P.'s organ ('Goebbels is a male Rosa Luxemburg—neither a pretty sight; both are of Jewish countenance. He is impelled by the same burning ambition to incite and to lie')⁴¹ he ordered his troops to refrain from similar personal insults. However, disguised as harmless civilians, his officials were to cluster around Nazi poster hoardings singing the party's praises.⁴²

Oct

Towards the campaign's end there was an odd episode: Goebbels decided that his Nazis were to back a communist-organized Berlin transport strike. It was as though he had lost sight of the Nazi party's larger election horizon. His men had heavily infiltrated the B.V.G., the capital's public transport authority. The transport workers probably had legitimate grievances, and Goebbels had remained at heart a socialist agitator. Kampmann, his propaganda chief, would claim that the strike was actually quite popular.⁴³ But the public's backing of the Nazi party melted away as all the usual brutish signs of union intimidation appeared, with the pickets this time wearing Nazi armbands. Together the Nazi and communist strikers terrorized strike breakers, ripped up streetcar lines, and wrecked buses. The liberal rightwing *Deutsche Allgemeine Zeitung* expressed concern about the spread of class-warfare to the extreme right.⁴⁴ 'The bourgeois press,' Goebbels would write in *Kaiserhof*, 'invented the lie that I instigated this strike without the Führer's knowledge or consent ... although I am in hourly phone contact with the Führer.' This self-defense is to be regarded with as much skepticism as his claim that the Berlin public displayed an 'admirable solidarity' with the strikers. Less hollow rings his excuse that to have withheld support from the strikers would have confounded all their recruiting efforts among the workers. Perhaps Goebbels had seen a chance for the Nazis to seize control of the strike and shortcut the tedious democratic process by expanding it into a full-blooded coup. But the strike backfired badly on their election campaign. Nationwide, two million voters deserted the party, costing them thirty-four of their 230 Reichstag seats. The communists gained strongly.⁴⁵ In Berlin, the Nazi vote slumped from 757,000 (or 28.6 percent) in July to 720,000 (or twenty-six percent) now. The bourgeois press gloated over this setback. At his Voss Strasse headquarters the next day he found his party and S.A. officers in ugly mood—'all ready to strike out again,' he wrote, a clear indication that a coup was still on their mind.⁴⁶ Hitler however ordained, 'There will be no negotiating until this regime and the parties backing it have been totally defeated.'⁴⁷

Although the German electorate had confirmed the Nazis as the largest single party, their opponents still clung on to the chancellorship. Count von Alvensleben reported that Papen hoped Hitler would come to terms; Gregor Strasser, it seemed, suddenly agreed with Papen, and for the first time on November 9 Goebbels recorded real venom about him. 'Let's

Scene

Nov

one of our best. do need to live with it.

1932

148 II: THE GAULEITER OF BERLIN

hope that Fatso Gregor doesn't put his foot in it. He's so disloyal. warn [Hitler] against Strasser.⁴⁸ Hitler however wrote to Papen, refusing to do a deal.⁴⁹ Papen resigned on the sixteenth.⁵⁰

Nov 19

Now Hindenburg again summoned Hitler to Berlin. On the nineteenth parting the cheering crowds outside the Kaiserhof, Hitler drove over the presidential palace in a limousine. After a ninety-minute talk which he explained his party's program once more to Hindenburg, He assured his henchmen that he still would not accept any compromise. Hindenburg however wanted to revert to parliamentary rule. Hitler with him on the twenty-first, then took Goebbels to the opera—Wagner's *Meistersinger* for the *nth* time.⁵¹

Nov 30

Hindenburg turned Hitler's proposals down. Some of Goebbels' faction urged that the time had come to seize power, at least in Prussia. For a few days Hitler remained at the Kaiserhof as a passive observer while Papen and Schleicher vied with each other for the coveted chancellor's prize. In Weimar on November 30 for the Thuringian election campaign Goebbels heard from Hitler that Schleicher had made fresh overtures to him. Goebbels attended a three-hour council of war with Hitler, Frick, Göring, and Strasser. Again Strasser was the only one in favor of compromise—joining a Cabinet under Schleicher, failing which the party seemed to be doomed to the political wilderness in perpetuity.⁵² A manly seconded by Goebbels, Hitler again refused to consider accepting the vice-chancellorship.⁵³

Dec 2

Tension at the Council. This could bleed them badly

General von Schleicher sent a new intermediary, Lieutenant-Colonel Eugen Ott. The press ached and heaved with curiosity. Hitler stood firm. 'Follow that man!' marveled Goebbels. 'Then we shall triumph.' Unable to sway Hitler, on December 2 Hindenburg appointed Schleicher chancellor.⁵⁴ Needing to neutralize the Nazi threat, Schleicher began to cultivate Gregor Strasser instead of Hitler. Goebbels learned that they had met on Sunday the fourth, and that Schleicher had offered Strasser the vice-chancellorship which Hitler had spurned, and had hinted ministerial positions for any other renegade Nazis as well.

The new Reichstag would shortly meet. As Hitler warned the Nazi bloc in harsh terms about any tendency toward compromise, Goebbels saw Strasser's features harden. Two days later, hearing more specious rumors about Strasser's treachery, Hitler took him to task. Strasser picked up his hat and left: left the room, left politics, and ultimately (nineteen months later) this life. Julius Streicher called out, 'Exit the traitor.' Goebbels limped from group to group of the Nazi deputies, dispensing further details of Strasser's treachery.

Dec 8

At midday on the eighth Hitler received at the Kaiserhof a letter from Strasser resigning all his high party offices on account of the refusal to cut a deal with the new chancellor.⁵⁵ Simultaneously Strasser invited the senior gauleiters—whom Hitler had just appointed as Landesinspektoren—to meet him (except Goebbels). Since August, he told them, Hitler had displayed no clear line except for his monotonous demand to be chancellor. 'He has got to realize that in the long run

one of our best. We need to liberate!

1932

has no prospect of attaining this target.' He refused to see the party ruined. Nor would he put up any longer with the intriguing by Hitler's entourage. 'I have no desire to fall in behind Göring, Goebbels, Röhm, and the rest.' (According to Hans Frank he described Göring as a brutal egoist who cared nothing for Germany, Goebbels as 'a hobbling devil,' and Röhm as a 'swine'.)⁵⁶ One gauleiter later reported: 'After the individual participants had overcome their dismay, they went off bewildered—like children who have lost their father.' Gauleiter Rust took word of Strasser's mutinous remarks to Hitler at the Kaiserhof.⁵⁷

At two A.M. Goebbels found Hitler there studying the first edition of the *Täglicher Rundschau*. It headlined Strasser's bid for power. 'If the party falls apart now,' he told Goebbels, 'I'll finish myself off in three minutes!'⁵⁸

The morning's 'Judenpresse' fawned on Strasser, which probably sobered down some of his supporters.⁵⁹ Only Gottfried Feder had foolishly echoed his complaints.⁶⁰ After that day's Reichstag session—it adjourned until mid-January 1933—Hitler spoke to all the gauleiters in his suite at the Kaiserhof. His speech was a masterpiece of tragic oratory, and probably saved the party from oblivion.⁶¹ If they deserted him now, said Hitler, his life's work no longer had any purpose. 'Apart from this movement and my appointed mission,' he declared, glancing at the portable bust of Geli on the mantelpiece, 'I have nothing now that could detain me on this earth.' He tore apart Strasser's arguments of the day before. Strasser had hinted at the path of illegality. But General Walter von Reichenau, army chief of staff, had warned that the army and police would open fire. Reichenau himself had urged patience—the party, he said, was bound to achieve power legally sooner or later. The whole speech was 'fabulously sure-footed,' in Goebbels' words—'annihilating for Strasser. . . . Spontaneous ovation at the end, everybody gave Hitler his hand. Strasser is isolated. A dead man! I have fought for six years for this.'⁶²

Hitler was unquestionably the master, and Strasser only the sorcerer's apprentice. Two months later, events would prove Hitler's strategy correct: and this would temper the loyalty of every high party official who had tortured his conscience this day.

Still reluctant to make a final break, Hitler's press office announced that Strasser had only gone on three weeks' leave.⁶³ Goebbels' newspaper published a more malicious valedictory; he had to disown it the same day.⁶⁴ He would continue his feud with Strasser to the bitter end. As for Strasser, he had left for the sunnier climes of Italy; he told friends afterward that Germany was now at the mercy of a congenital liar from Austria and a clubfooted dwarf, of which the latter was the worst. 'He is Satan in a human's image.'⁶⁵

He is still
human as
Goebbels.

Hitler is too narrow that he
will want, he was effectively
gone or our heart. He used to live and

→ On the way is
that we did not need him.
He was human through and through

1932

19: 'It's All Fixed!'

'**W**E have just completed,' reported Louis P. Lochner ^{was} December 1932 to his daughter, 'one of the hardest months of reporting in my career.... I tell you,' Lochner added, had no end of excitement.'¹

Goebbels had inevitably neglected the provincial election in Thuringia and the party's vote there slumped by forty percent. Wakening to realization that the Nazi party was in danger of electoral extinction took immediate action to revitalize the propaganda campaign: Blaming Dr Lippert for the tactless remarks about Strasser, he replaced his editor of *Angriff* by Kampmann.² Hanke told him that the deputy chief of national propaganda, Heinz Franke, had allowed his Munich organization to go to seed. Goebbels replaced him with Wilhelm Haegeler, a sound and popular attorney on his own legal staff.³

After consultation with Goebbels, on December 15 Hitler drafted a memorandum explaining how the party was to pack more punch in the election battle.⁴

In the first two weeks of Schleicher's chancellorship a quarter-million more Germans had been thrown out of work. On December 15 Goebbels delivered an insipid broadcast on his economic program. Goebbels wrote a caustic commentary in *Angriff* entitled 'The Program without a Program.' The people were now too weak, he wrote there a few days later, even to clench their fists.⁵

As he toured the gau's Christmas parties at the historic Pharos Restaurant and the Veterans' Building, he saw worse scenes of poverty than before.⁶

RETURNING home immediately after the Strasser brouhaha he has found Magda feeling ill. She is pregnant again. He is still madly in love with her—Magda tells Ello that their honeymoon is going to last ten more years yet. Her husband worries constantly about her as he mounts the new propaganda campaign. His hours grow longer and longer. Sometimes he creeps in at three A.M.; when Magda weakly scolds him he brings her roses. Her illness will not go away. When, at some of the Christmas parties, he glances at the beautiful society women, Providence immediately raps his knuckles. Magda collapses on Christmas Eve and is buried off in floods of tears with a miscarriage. 'Just perfect,' he curses in his diary. 'Now everybody else has their gifts and fare, let my own Christmas ^{was}

1932-1933

'IT'S ALL FIXED!' 151

begin!⁸ He and Harald set up a Christmas tree outside her ward and wheel the whole glittering contraption in.

Then, thrusting aside all the trappings of Christmas, he sketches out for Magda on a white-lacquered clinic stool his plan for the upcoming election campaign in little Lippe. The Nazi party will focus its entire national propaganda machinery on the tiny rural constituency, like a burning glass. None of the other parties is bothering with Lippe's 150,000 voters.⁹ He has Hitler alone speak at sixteen meetings there.

Hitler invites the Goebbels family to the Obersalzberg. Leaving Magda in the clinic, Goebbels takes Harald down there on the twenty-eighth but the news from Berlin steadily worsens and he begins to brood upon the unimaginable, a future without Magda. He pays scant attention to the seismic sounds of fresh political upheaval—the renewed billets-doux from Papen and Alvensleben to Hitler. All joy has left the political fray. New Year's Eve brings word of a relapse and of Magda refusing to eat. The first hours of 1933 see him hurrying by sled and car to Munich; as he waits for the overnight train to Berlin the power of prayer returns to him. 'I am nothing without her,' he writes. The clinic tells him by phone that her fever is worsening. She is at death's door. 'Is this how 1933 is to begin? Horrifying! Even so, I shall stand and fight.' The next morning he arrives to find the crisis over. Magda lies there weeping, with intravenous tubes still connected to her arm, but the fever has passed on.¹⁰ Over the next weeks she makes a slow recovery, and Hitler often comes to see her.

FOR an analysis of the epoch-making events of January 1933 the hand-written diaries of Dr Goebbels, preserved in Moscow, are an indispensable tool.¹¹ For a biographer however their content is less revealing than their structure. True, he was preoccupied with Magda's illness; her gynecologist Professor Walter Stoeckel had already written her off, it turned out.¹² As Hitler's and Göring's meetings resumed with Schleicher, Hugenberg, and Papen, Goebbels dutifully recorded them—but only at second or third hand. On January 4 he launched the Lippe campaign: He now discovered rural Germany, speaking in tiny farming villages sometimes of only a few houses and barns surrounded by fields glistening with snow. Meanwhile Hitler and Himmler secretly met Papen at the Cologne home of a young banker friend of the party.¹³ Briefing Goebbels on this meeting, Hitler said that the ex-chancellor still claimed Hindenburg's ear and was now willing to offer Hitler the chancellorship in return for the vice-chancellor's office for himself.¹⁴ But much depended on the Nazis winning a convincing victory at Lippe.

Goebbels shuttled between Berlin and Lippe. Leftists had murdered another young Nazi, the tailor's apprentice Walter Wagnitz, on New Year's Day. Goebbels gave him a funeral fit for a prince, parading the coffin for three hours in drizzling rain past a hundred thousand party members and formations of the S.A., S.S., and Hitler Youth.

The figure of Gregor Strasser still haunted the pages of his diary.

1933

Unlike Stennes, the man still enjoyed wide support in the party's ranks. Even Hitler was not as hostile to him as Goebbels would have liked. Indeed, the Führer sent the gauleiter of Saxony to hint to Strasser he could let bygones be bygones even now.¹⁵ At Göring's apartment the tenth, the talk was again only of Strasser. Hindenburg's office the press that he was thinking of appointing 'a National Socialist' as chancellor, and on the twelfth his Staatssekretär Otto Meißner revealed that Strasser had secretly met the president. The next day Göring told Goebbels that Strasser was about to do the dirty on them; the president hinted that Strasser was to become vice-chancellor.¹⁶

Jan 15 The voting in Lippe on January 15, 1933 brought the personal triumph that Hitler therefore badly needed. The party's vote surged forward twenty percent. Strasser was done for. On the sixteenth Hitler addressed the gauleiters assembled at Weimar for three hours. 'Hitler's victory' wrote Goebbels, 'is total. We have sweated out the Strasser affair.'¹⁷

THE REICHSTAG was due to meet again at the end of January 1933 in effect the Nazis were already in control, as Goebbels proved, with an outrageous provocation a few days before then: The memorial to Horst Wessel was to be dedicated on the twenty-second. He arranged twenty thousand S.A. men to parade on Bülow Platz right outside the communist party's national HQ. General von Schleicher pleaded with Hitler not to risk attending. 'He who dares,' advised Goebbels, 'wins.' The Berlin police had to protect the parade with machine-guns, arm cars, and sharpshooters. The Nazi pageantry was blemished only by Wessel; she repaid Hitler's earlier indifference to her son's death by arriving late and making him wait half an hour. *Mue*

Jan 27 Hindenburg's slow-witted son Oskar and his secretary Otto Meißner encouraged Hitler to fight on. All were agreed that Schleicher's time was up. For two days rumors flew as Göring and Frick negotiated with other aspirants to power. On January 27 Schleicher had been reconvinced to resigning on Saturday, but he was still campaigning stubbornly against Hitler's taking over.¹⁹ Hitler bargained with Hugenberg about a coalition that evening. But the D.N.V.P. stated unacceptable demands. Schleicher resigned on Saturday the twenty-eighth. The Reichstag was to meet on the following Tuesday. Goebbels sat at home, nervously playing with the infant Helga, while Göring carried on the bargaining process. Sunday Goebbels drafted a belligerent leading article, then went over for coffee at the Kaiserhof. As he was nervously chatting with Hitler, Göring burst in and roared: 'It's all fixed!' Papen had agreed to recommend Hitler's appointment as chancellor. Those present solemnly rose and shook hands all round. Göring added that Frick was to be minister of the interior in the Reich, with himself as his counterpart in Prussia. Hitler announced that he would dissolve the Reichstag at once to establish an absolute majority he needed to fight one more election campaign—the very last one,' noted Goebbels cynically, 'but we'll win it off.'

Jan 29, 1933

'IT'S ALL FIXED!' 153

There was one serious snag for Goebbels. Hitler's canny opponents had not allowed his Nazis even now more than three ministerial portfolios. Goebbels had taken a propaganda ministry for granted. Hitler cleverly weaned him off his disappointment, arguing that a government minister of propaganda could hardly direct a necessarily partisan election campaign. He promised Goebbels he would get his ministry—later; they would appoint a straw man to keep the seat warm meanwhile.

At the eleventh hour, that Sunday January 29, 1933, Alvensleben, Schleicher's man, brought rumors of an army putsch being planned by his generals with General von Hammerstein, the army chief of staff. Not for the last time, however, the German army proved incapable of decisive political action.²¹

AT eleven A.M.—it was now January 30, 1933—President von Hindenburg sent for Hitler and swore him in as chancellor. Goebbels waited at the Kaiserhof. 'The Old Man was quite emotional,' Hitler told him afterwards. 'He's delighted that the nationalist right wing has united at last.' Goebbels phoned Magda with the news.²²

'Herr Doctor,' Ello Quandt admonished him afterward, 'now the going gets tougher. You've got to show what you and your friends can do.'

His joy evaporated. 'Whatever!' he snapped. 'Now we're in power. And nobody's going to cheat us of that. We know all the tricks!'²³ He ordered Berlin's biggest-ever torchlight parade for that night, changed into uniform, and drove off to the Reich chancellery for the first time in his life.

1933

20: The Big Lie

FOR Joseph Goebbels the years of poverty and struggle seemed to be over, though he still had no formal government office.

He was now thirty-five, his life already three-quarters spent. 'G.' wrote one official English visitor at this time, 'has charm and a captivating smile and manner'—surprising, he felt, in one described as the cruelest man in the whole movement. The Englishman detected in Goebbels something of an intensely enthusiastic undergraduate, but also a dangerous fanatic.¹ Franz von Papen was struck by the wide mouth and intelligent eyes. General Werner von Blomberg, Hitler's new defense minister, felt that Goebbels was convinced of his own superiority.² Goebbels' staff would find him a disagreeable employer. He rarely showed gratitude, and preferred cruel sarcasm to measured criticism. 'A man with many enemies,' concluded Blomberg, 'Goebbels had no friends at all.'

Wisely, most of his enemies had fled. Albert Grzesinski had escaped to Paris where he was even now composing memoirs in which Dr Goebbels would not fare well at all.³ Dr Bernhard Weiss had fled to Czechoslovakia. With their departure, Goebbels was at a rather loose end. 'G.,' Alfred Rosenberg would write, 'was a discharger of purulence. Until 1933 he squirted it at Isidor Weiss. With him gone, he began to discharge it over us instead.'⁴ The publication in 1934 of his opinionated diaries *Kaiserhof* would infuriate the other top Nazis. 'They used to say that the falsification of history begins after fifty years,' Ribbentrop would snort to his family. 'Wrong—it starts at once!' (Goebbels had not mentioned him.)⁵ *Falsch - es starte plötzlich!*

Not that the diaries are devoid of inherent usefulness. While the later volumes utilized repeatedly the same stereotype phrases, this very ossification enables us to deduce where perhaps other unwritten events need to be suspected between the lines. They lauded Magda Goebbels so cloyingly that one suspects that Goebbels' occasional nocturnal *Spazierfahrt* (motor outing) through Berlin was designed to grab more than just the 'breath of fresh air' to which he referred. The diaries portray him at other times as flogging himself to the limits of endurance for the cause. ('Twelve hours non-stop sitting at my desk today,' he writes in July 1933.) But as the years passed the pages filled with unbecoming references to villas, boats, and motor cars—the latter evidently donated by the party's benefactors in the Daimler-Benz company.

Febr.

1933

158 III: THE REICH MINISTER

Kaiserhof made him briefly a wealthy man. Tax returns among papers indicate that his literary royalties total 34,376 marks in fi 1933, 134,423 in 1934 (the year of *Kaiserhof*), 62,190 in 1935, 63, in 1936, and 66,905 the year after that.⁶

He had firmly hitched his star to his Führer (still often referred to 'Hitler' in the 1933 diary). Over the following years he consolidated a personal relationship, becoming a regular lunch guest at the chancellery where he delighted the others with his repartee. Far into the night he Hitler yarned about cars and kings and criminals. 'And how we laughed' he recorded after one session that summer. 'Until my jawbone ached'

In September 1933 Hitler turned the first sod to begin work Germany's autobahn network; Goebbels saw the crowds cheering weeping.⁷ Often the Führer revealed to him his secret plans—to unite and expand the Reich under one central government, but also eventually to create a senate to provide the checks and balances that even a dictatorship would need. After President von Hindenburg's demise, he agreed, Hitler himself should become head of state, with a popular vote to confirm it when that time came.⁸

ON that historic day when Adolf Hitler came to power Goebbels stood next to him in the chancellery window looking down on his hour torchlight parade. One million Berliners surged past them, holding up their children to their new leader, to the thump and blare of brass bands. A radio truck arrived and Goebbels spoke a running comment he found that speaking into a radio microphone took some getting used to. 'It is a moving experience,' he ended, 'for me to see how in this place where we began six years ago with just a handful of people, the German public has arisen and is marching past below—workers and citizens, farmers and students and soldiers. . . . Truly one can say, German awakening.' Only Munich and Stuttgart refused to carry the broadcast.

Chilling news awaited him on his return home at three A.M. that night. Assassins had gunned down his twenty-four year old S.A. officer Heinrich Eberhard Maikowski and a police constable.¹⁰ Maikowski, an aviator and veteran of the Pharus Rooms battle, had marched at the head of his 33 Sturm in that evening's parade. Hitler told Goebbels that he wanted no reprisals. He wanted the Red Terror to 'burn out first'—a phrase which Goebbels subtly changed in *Kaiserhof*, the published text, to 'burn up.' He had six hundred thousand Berliners line the rain-sodden streets of Berlin for the funeral of Maikowski and the policeman. The Brown S.A.'s scoundrelly commander Count von Helldorff strutted at the head of the parade; he had put all bars off limits to his S.A. as a mark of respect that day, but he himself was sighted that evening in full uniform particularly sleazy Kurfürstendamm bar.¹¹

Still feeble from her illness, Magda came home on February 1. Goebbels broke it to her that he was not included in Hitler's Cabinet. 'I am being frozen out,' he wrote in his diary. Although Hitler had mentioned a propaganda ministry several times in recent months, he had now given

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1933

to the tedious and narrow-minded ex-schoolteacher Bernhard Rust the responsibility for culture and higher education in Prussia. Goebbels heard whispers that he was to be fobbed off with the job of radio commissioner. 'They've stood me in the corner,' he recorded privately. 'Fat lot of good Hitler is.'

Hitler did not even plan to take any steps as yet against the press. 'We want to lull them into a sense of security,' mimicked Goebbels. Things got worse. On February 5 Hitler appointed the financial journalist Walther Funk his Staatssekretär for 'press and propaganda.' Meanwhile throughout Prussia Göring appointed reliable new police chiefs, and added to the provisional arrest-lists of communists already prepared by his predecessors; Göring also banned the police force's rubber truncheons. A flurry of bans descended on their enemies—the Social Democrat newspapers like *Vorwärts* and 'all those Jewish organs,' as Goebbels wrote, 'that have been such a pain in our necks.'

The disappointment at being excluded from office gnawed at Goebbels. Never in robust health, he fell ill, his days and nights troubled by feverish fantasies. 'I am tired and disheartened,' he wrote in mid-February 1933. 'I have no aim and no longer take any pleasure in my work.' The party was in power, and he was an outcast! 'The likes of Göring reigns supreme,' he observed ironically. When Karl Hanke, his chief aide, now told him not to expect any government funds for the coming election battle, Goebbels scoffed, 'Then let Fatso Göring do without his caviar for once!' (He prudently cut this suggestion out of the published text.) After a week in bed he went to the Sport Palace with Hitler and listened to His Master's guttural Voice intoning against marxism, setting the tenor of the coming final election battle. Hitler actually ended with the word 'Amen!'—a brilliant touch in Goebbels' view.

In the run-up to election eve, which Goebbels proclaimed to be the Day of the Awakening Nation, he developed a propaganda campaign of a depth and breadth surpassing anything before. Partial control of the radio stations ensured that every night his or Hitler's voice was heard. With the Prussian police now in Göring's hands, of course, the going was much easier. But the Jews and communists who had fled to Prague, Paris, and London poured vitriol over the new Hitler government. Irresponsible foreign journalists did the rest. Even ex-chancellor Brüning, still in Germany, watched in fury as they filed blatantly untrue stories exaggerating the plight of the Jews. 'In the spring of 1933,' Brüning would write, 'foreign correspondents reported that the river Spree was covered with the corpses of murdered Jews.' At that time, he pointed out, hardly any Jews had suffered except for the leaders of the communist party.¹²

This year, 1933, was however the year of the Big Lie. On Monday evening February 27 occurred one of the most controversial episodes of the whole era. Hitler had come to dine with the Goebbels family. Shortly, Goebbels was called away to take a phone call from Hitler's friend Ernst 'Putzi' Hanfstaengl, a well-known prankster. Hanfstaengl shouted

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160 III: THE REICH MINISTER

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excitedly that the Reichstag building was on fire. Since Goebbels twitted him with a phone call only days before, he ignored the mess. Hanfstaengl phoned again, this time to report that he could see flames leaping out of the Reichstag's cupola.¹³ Hitler and Goebbels tried to phone the Reichstag; nobody answered—small wonder, because a phone call to the Brandenburg Gate police station confirmed that the Reichstag was on fire. They drove off at top speed down the Charlotten Chaussee.

Afterward the world's press clamored that the Nazis themselves started the blaze. With this author's discovery of the missing Goebbels Diary entries in Moscow, that version is finally laid to rest. He, Hitler and Göring were equally stunned by the news.

Hitler summons me to the Kaiserhof [this day's unpublished begins]. He's enthusiastic about my [radio] commentaries. Munich and Nuremberg were really great... Hitler fabulous always...

Back home to work. Much to do. At nine P.M. Hitler and Auwers over. Music and gossip. Then Hanfstaengl phones: Says the Reichstag on fire. What a wit! But turns out to be true. Race straight down with Hitler. The entire building a mass of flames. [We] go in. Göring follows. Papen, whose acquaintance I thus make, is also there. I arson sites. Fires set by the communists. Göring rampant, I raging, Papen clear-headed. The main assembly chamber a picture of devastation. So take action now!... To work! Hitler consults Papen. We meet back at the Kaiserhof. Everybody beaming. This the last straw. Now we're well away. Culprit caught, a twenty-year-old Dutch communist.¹⁴

'He's being interrogated now,' Göring told them. 'We decided straight away,' Goebbels related at the subsequent trial, 'to ban the communist press and later the Social Democrat press too, and to take the communist officials into custody.'¹⁵ Göring ordered the S.A. to start in case of an all-out communist uprising.

At midnight Hitler and Goebbels hurried over to the *Völkischer Beobachter's* Berlin office. It took half an hour even to get into the sleazy building, and more time was wasted while printworkers, compositors and a surly sub-editor were found. There was no sign of Roser himself, the editor. Scouring the proofs of the next day's edition, I finally found the sensational news tucked away in the Berlin in column ('Fire damage to the Reichstag'). 'Man, are you mad?' he shouted at the sub-editor. 'This is an event on a colossal scale!'¹⁶

We drove over to the VB [Goebbels' diary continues]. It is badly laid out. Hitler sets to work there straight away. I dictate a gau poster and a fabulous article...¹⁷ During the night all communist party officials are arrested. Entire communist and Social Democrat press banned. Good work done... Over to Hitler at Kaiserhof.

March 1933

THE BIG LIE 161

delighted with my article. It is half-past five in the morning. . . Two S.A. men shot in Berlin. To sleep at seven. Three hours. Then straight back to work!

The fire was a godsend to the Nazi radicals. Goebbels was already disquieted by the speed with which Hitler and even Göring were succumbing to Hindenburg's bourgeois spell. This lone communist fire-raiser had rescued the revolution. During the night he sent for the journalist Alfred-Ingemar Berndt to take down a fiery press release.¹⁸ This announced the sweeping arrests, and described the Reichstag fire as a communist beacon, a signal for a marxist insurrection. This was as much a lie as the claim by Jewish and communist agencies worldwide that the Nazis had staged the fire. Even the authoritative *Manchester Guardian* published a dispatch from an anonymous special correspondent alleging that Hitler, Göring, and Goebbels had foregathered in Berlin that evening 'awaiting their fire.'¹⁹ The world's press readily copied this Big Lie, and historians in time adopted it from them.

Neither Hitler nor Goebbels wanted to believe that the mad Dutch communist Marinus van der Lubbe had acted alone in torching the Reichstag building. Eight years later Hitler still suspected that the hand of Ernst Torgler, the communist leader, had been behind it.²⁰

THE last four days of the election battle saw the scheming, marching, speaking, singing, bell-ringing, flagwaving climax of Goebbels' career so far. On election day itself, March 5, 1933 he and Magda escorted Hitler to a Wagner opera, then sat up late waiting for the returns. Goebbels found them disappointing. True, the Nazis had won 43.9 percent, but Hitler was still well short of the absolute majority he craved; in his own Berlin constituency the Nazis had achieved with 31.3 percent the second lowest vote after Cologne-Aachen. Goebbels however was now free to come into the government. Hitler announced at his next Cabinet that the new Reichstag would be solemnly inaugurated at a session in the famous Garrison Church at Potsdam, with President von Hindenburg in attendance. 'Now,' he added, 'there must come about a bold operation of propaganda and enlightenment, designed to forestall any political lethargy. This public enlightenment must emanate from a newly created central authority.'²¹

Thus Goebbels got his job as Reich minister of propaganda and public enlightenment—a cumbersome title pressed on him by Hitler.²² He hated that word 'propaganda' and went to elaborate lengths over coming years to cleanse it of its negative hubris.²³ As for the ministry, he already had the necessary structure in mind—initially seven divisions, controlling the radio, press, films, propaganda, and the theater as well as a legal department and a defense department (to defend, that is, against lies). Nobody would ever deny that Goebbels proved a capable minister, and in this he was aided by his first Staatssekretär Walther Funk. They made an odd couple—the one now notoriously heterosexual and seemingly ascetic, the

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March 1933
162 III: THE REICH MINISTER

other a homosexual and bon viveur. Funk later called his minister bright but devoid of any scruple and cruelly, coldly calculating. His per conceit led to angry complaints over the years from composer Ric Strauss, conductor Wilhelm Furtwängler, film star Emil Jannings, scores of others. 'Goebbels' treatment of female artistes,' remind Funk irritably, 'was a great deal friendlier.'²⁴

Berlin's Jewish community was stricken by forebodings. Hans Sch still Staatssekretär in the finance ministry and a board-member o powerful Ullstein newspaper group, wrote in his well-informed d 'It's apparently not definite whether Goebbels will also get the 1 under him. Hitler and Funk are opposed, as he'd become too powerf Bella Fromm, forty-three-year-old society columnist on an Ullstein n paper, noted the club foot and recalled her grandmother's advice: 'Be ^{wave} of those who are marked.'²⁶ At a diplomatic reception later that month Goebbels found her at his table and expatiated rudely against all ^{women?} and communists. The Romanian envoy soothingly told him that Jewish though the lovely Bella might be, she was right-wing. 'Even worse snapped the new minister.'²⁷

Initially Schäffer's minister, the conservative Count Schwerin Krosigk, refused even to provide any funds for what he called [propaganda ministry] nonsense.'²⁸ On the eleventh the Cabinet debated the new ministry; Hitler justified it as being necessary to prepare ^{public} opinion for important government actions—he cited a harmless-soun agricultural example involving foodstuff policies, then added: importance of all this in time of war must also be stressed. The gov ment would act only after the public-enlightenment phase had run some time and taken hold.' He would however reserve ultimate co of the press to himself. Only Hugenberg, a major newspaper ow expressed qualms.²⁹ Two days later President von Hindenburg signed decree establishing the propaganda ministry.³⁰

Goebbels, Germany's youngest-ever minister, addressed his first : isterial press conference on March 15. 'The Reich government,' he the world's newspapermen, 'needs more than fifty-two percent o whole electorate'—he had included the voters of the D.N.V.P., which in coalition with Hitler—it needs the whole nation.'³¹ Nobody ign him now. The American ambassador warned his new president, Fra D. Roosevelt, that Goebbels was a master orator—far superior to Hitler and far cleverer.³²

to house his new ministry Goebbels had been allocated the rambling Prince-Leopold Palace on Wilhelms Platz, right across from Hi chancellery. It was the kind of listed architecture before which servants instinctively genuflected. Its great salons had been kept manently locked, the priceless furniture shrouded in dustsheets. paneling was dark and musty, the windows narrow and obscure heavy drapes. A refit was out of the question. The building's custoe Hofrat (privy counselor) Schwebel, nervously lectured the young 1

March 22, 1933

THE BIG LIE 163

comer that not even the minister's own office could be changed. Goebbels ignored him. Had there not been a revolution? He recruited builders and decorators from the ranks of his S.A. and they stripped out the offending plaster and stucco overnight. 'You might go to prison for that' gasped Schwebel.³³

Goebbels moved in on Wednesday March 22, 1933.

The international Big Lie campaign (as the Nazis saw it) against Hitler's Germany had redoubled in intensity since the election. Disgruntled opponents committed outrages in stolen Nazi uniforms. The Cabinet approved harsh penalties for such impersonations—Goebbels even urged the death penalty.³⁴ Émigré journalists published lurid reports from Berlin. One said that Hitler had ordered Torgler's ears cut off; another that the body of Hirsch, the editor of *Red Flag*, had been found floating in a canal; a third that Ernst Thälmann had been tortured to death. Enraged by the newspaper dispatches, the international Jewish community started a boycott of German goods.³⁵ In London, Jewish restaurants refused to serve Germans. Goebbels retaliated by inviting Sefton Delmer, a British newspaperman who had covered the Reichstag blaze, to visit Torgler, Hirsch, and Thälmann in custody. Offered the front page of the London *Daily Express*, Goebbels challenged the émigrés to name even one Jew who had yet died. 'The Jews living in Germany,' he wrote in his article, 'have held such an enormously large number of powerful posts in the life of the nation that the German element seemed almost completely excluded from the leading positions.' He blamed the Jews for spreading similar atrocity stories during the world war. 'The German nation today has other business to do than to stage blood baths and indulge in Jew baiting.'³⁶ Berlin wiretaps confirmed that the Hearst press's Berlin correspondent was the arch culprit.³⁷

The upshot of the Jewish campaign overseas was that Goebbels secured from Hitler—or so he claimed—approval to threaten a short, sharp counter-boycott of the Jews. He told his Cabinet colleagues on March 29 that this threat had been extremely effective and that the main Jewish agency in Berlin, the Central-Verein, had promised that the foreign smear campaign would cease. Nevertheless on March 31 he announced a one-day boycott of all Jewish stores. 'Tomorrow,' he said, broadcasting from a mass rally, 'not one German man or woman is to enter a Jewish store.' There would follow a three-day period to assess the impact of the boycott, and it would be repeated if necessary until, as he put it, 'German Jewry has been annihilated.'³⁸ Raising the boycott at midnight on April 1, he told a cheering throng in the Lustgarten that he could easily reimpose it. 'If it must be resumed,' he threatened, 'we shall crush German Jewry.'³⁹

The world's press greeted Goebbels' crude but effective boycott with uproar (while overlooking the Jewish boycott which had triggered it). Speaking to an official British visitor Goebbels quoted in justification the familiar figures on the preponderance of Jews among Germany's lawyers, doctors, and other wealthy professions. As for isolated anti-Jewish out-

Scene

March 22

March 22

we will indeed go to prison for that! after all his little was done.

29.

31.

April:

12 33

Friday, March 24, 1933



Daily Express

Today's Weather: Fair, Mild.

No. 10,255

FRIDAY, MARCH 24, 1933.



ONE PENNY



Aids dig: 2d, 6d, 9d

JUDEA DECLARES WAR ON GERMAN

Jews Of All The World Unite In Action

BOYCOTT OF GERMAN GOODS

MASS DEMONSTRATIONS IN MANY DISTRICTS

DRAMATIC ACTION

"Daily Express" Special Political Correspondent.

ALL Israel is uniting in wrath against the Nazi onslaught on the Jews in Germany.

Adolf Hitler, swept into power by an appeal to elemental persecution, is making history of a kind he has not expected. Thinking to unite only the German nation to raise consciousness he has roused the whole Jewish people to a national resistance. The appearance of the Jewish people of a new Germany has called forth the Lion of Judah, the old battle symbol of Jewish faith.

Fourteen million Jews dispersed throughout the world have looked upon the German people as the enemy of the Jew. In the eyes of the Jew, the German people are the enemy of the Jew. The Jew has been the victim of the German people's persecution. The Jew has been the victim of the German people's persecution. The Jew has been the victim of the German people's persecution.

Concrete action has been taken in many districts. The Jews have been the victims of the German people's persecution. The Jews have been the victims of the German people's persecution. The Jews have been the victims of the German people's persecution.

Shipping has been stopped. The Jews have been the victims of the German people's persecution. The Jews have been the victims of the German people's persecution. The Jews have been the victims of the German people's persecution.

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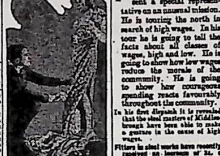
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HIGHER WAGES FOR STEEL WORKERS

AN INCREASE OF THREE SHILLINGS A WEEK

BRIGHT SPOT IN A BLACK TOWN



THE BIRK OF AN IDEA

OFFICERS DAYS OF LOVE IN BERLIN

ARMY MEN WOULD START THIS TOWN AGAIN

"Daily Express" Special Correspondent.

Staggered days and nights of love in Berlin. The army men would start this town again.

Staggered days and nights of love in Berlin. The army men would start this town again.

Staggered days and nights of love in Berlin. The army men would start this town again.

Staggered days and nights of love in Berlin. The army men would start this town again.

Staggered days and nights of love in Berlin. The army men would start this town again.

MR. MacDONALD EXPI HIS TOUR

"PEACE CAN BE KEPT EUROPE"

New "Sweep" Bill In The Dail

MR. DE VALERA AND STATE CONTROL

SECRET MEASURE

MR. De Valera's new "Sweep" Bill in the Dail. The measure is a secret one.

GOLDEN HOPES

Great Ireland's hopes for the future. The people are optimistic.

Great Ireland's hopes for the future. The people are optimistic.

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You can easily wreck your car this way

Or you can just neglect the LUBRICATION

Neglected lubrication is just sure a method, but less spectra

Lubrication means much more than just up the oil pump. There are many parts of your car that need careful attention—your manufacturer tells you that.

Of course, it would take you hours and to do the job properly. That is why introduced Control Lubrication. Briefly, stations in your district have equipped with labour-saving devices to job completely, quickly and well, using genuine Control Lubricants. Ask us in address.

Castrol LUBREQUIPMENT SERVICE

SCIENTIFIC LUBRICATION WHILE YOU WAIT



A CASUALTY AT ADRIATIC—The hero had to be shot, though the enemy was only a few yards away.

April 1933

rages reported during the boycott, he claimed that communists disguised in Nazi uniforms had perpetrated them.⁴⁰

He enjoyed the thrill of unbridled power; he fancied that the world's Jews were whimpering with fear.⁴¹ Yet his antisemitism was still broadly tactical, rather than innate. He needed the stimulus of a visible enemy. He could still split his sides laughing at the Jewish comedian Otto Wallburg, who would later die in Auschwitz.⁴² When Furtwängler, conductor of the Berlin Philharmonic, bravely protested at the discrimination against Otto Klemperer, Bruno Walter, and Max Reinhardt, he replied: 'We can see no objection to having Leo Blech [another Jew] direct some German masterpiece at the state opera, because no one gets the feeling of any violence done to the national spirit. But it is not necessary that the majority of opera conductors should be Jews. . . . Those of Jewish blood who have real ability should be free to exercise their art: But they must not call the shots.'⁴³

HE attended virtually every Cabinet that year. Intellectually far above the rest, he easily worsted them in debate. Between them the dialectician Goebbels and the brutal Göring made opposition impossible. 'They attacked every problem,' Vice-Chancellor von Papen recalled, 'with the furious élan of the rabble-rouser.'⁴⁴ Goebbels' secret diary now bristled with barbed references to Göring's pathological ambition, his pompous megalomania, and his ever gaudier uniforms.⁴⁵ He had to fight hard to wrest control of the radio from the aviator's porcine clutches.⁴⁶ He found Göring cavorting with his lady friend Emmy (still married to another) at the Berghof in August. Hitler delivered an outspoken speech to his gauleiters about uniforms—'no names,' wrote Goebbels, stifling a chuckle, 'but everybody knew whom he meant.'⁴⁷ Learning that 'Fatso' was demanding the rank of general, Goebbels wrote, 'Why not field marshal and be done with it!'⁴⁸

ON April 25 he returned home to receive the civic dignities that the worthies of his native Rheydt now hastened to bestow upon him. The townsfolk had hung out a sea of flags; the catholic church bells pealed, no doubt equally willingly. He had let it be known that he desired a torchlight parade past his home. His mother stood beside him at an upstairs window. 'For eight years she has been vilified on my account,' he lectured the mayor. 'And she was the only one who understood me.'⁴⁹ At his old school he spoke once more from the stage where he had delivered the valediction sixteen years before. Local boy makes good: But his career in infamy was only just beginning.

April, 1933

21: Bonfire of the Books

IN April 1933 the Reich Cabinet tackled May Day: Should traditional workers' festival now be proscribed?

'Leave May Day to me,' said Goebbels, and declared it a national holiday instead—bigger and brasher than anything that had before. He rallied a million and a half Berliners on the Tempelhof and basked beside the Führer in his open limousine as it majestically rolled through the cheering masses.

'Mein Führer,' he boasted at the microphone, 'I stand before you the spokesman of the greatest multi-million movement that Germany has ever borne!'¹

An acrid stench filled the Berlin air as Hitler was dining with Auwiler May 10. He heard that an enormous bonfire of books was blazing beneath newsreel floodlights in the opera square, and made a wry comment at Goebbels' revolutionary activism.²

In fact Goebbels was not the instigator.³ The party's student organization had first approached his ministry a month earlier for financial support for this symbolic burning of decadent and anti-German literature. Although they had listed him as principal speaker in a draft program as early as April 10, for several weeks he had kept his distance: He had all studied under famous Jewish teachers like Waldberg and Gundolf. It was not until a week before the event that his adjutant finally convinced the students his agreement to deliver the main speech.⁴ Between opera and the university they had erected a crisscross log pyre, twelve feet square and five feet high, on a thick bed of sand. Some sixty thousand students assembled in their full regalia and solemnly marched to the square carrying flaming torches, with an S.A. marching band at their head. Forty thousand Berliners packed the square. As the students hove into sight, followed by motorized tumbrels charged with the condemned books and pamphlets, the Berliners' cheering turned into mass hysteria.

'I thought they'd all gone stark raving mad,' wrote Bella Freund privately, 'particularly the womenfolk.'⁵

The students marched around the bonfire tossing books onto it. Indictments were read over the loudspeakers. As each hated author was named the cheers rang louder—and not just in Berlin: In every German university city the bonfires blazed that night, on the Königsplatz in Munich, the Römerberg in Frankfurt, and the Castle Square in Breslau.

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Indictments
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May 1933

BONFIRE OF THE BOOKS 167

At midnight the little Doctor himself drove up and mounted the swastika-decked rostrum. Golo Mann, a student witness of the scene, noticed that Goebbels seemed distinctly ill at ease.⁶ His brief radio commentary was heard all over Germany. 'The Age of Jewish Intellectualism is over,' he remarked, in a tone that was more reasoned than inflammatory. 'This symbolic fire is blazing now outside many a German university, to show the world that here the intellectual basis of the November Republic is sinking into the ground.' 'If the old men cannot understand what is going on,' he intoned, 'then let them grasp that we young men have gone and done it!'

The ugly bonfires seized the world's headlines. The *New York Times* devoted a whole page to them, and published the Nazis' list of 160 proscribed authors in full.⁷

Speaking in the Sport Palace the next day Goebbels warned the Jews against continuing their international boycott against Germany. 'We have spared the Jews,' he said, 'but if they think . . . that they can again stroll down the Kurfürstendamm as if nothing at all has happened, let them heed my words as a last warning.' The Jews were guests in Germany, he said, and must behave accordingly.⁸

That month, May 1933, Goebbels announced extensive overseas trips to explain the new Germany. He mentioned Danzig, Vienna, Rome, and Chicago (he hoped to be Germany's delegate to Chicago's World's Fair). Reaction was swift. The Danzig Senate banned him from speaking, and the Jews orchestrated massive protests in Chicago.⁹

Italy posed none of these problems. Goebbels traveled there at the end of May taking not only the Italian-speaking Magda, as Otto Wagener remarked jealously to Bella Fromm, but 'a few of his mistresses who are disguised as his secretaries.'¹⁰ The incumbent ambassador in Rome, Ulrich von Hassell, struck Goebbels as singularly incompetent.¹¹ Officially the propaganda minister's purpose was to study the Italian film industry, but he also engaged in secret talks with the king and Mussolini. He had long admired the Duce as an inspiring orator. 'Mussolini,' he once observed, 'does not like to be photographed smiling. Why should he? To be a statesman takes instinct, circumspection, and a gift for both organization and oratory.'¹²

On parting, Mussolini bade Goebbels assure Hitler that he would go through thick and thin with him.¹³

A MEN's fashion magazine publishes a photograph taken in Rome—of Goebbels in gala uniform, with the tongue-in-cheek caption: 'The Society Dress for Storm Troopers.'¹⁴ Magda has similar public relations problems. Commanded by Ullstein's now Nazi-groveling *Berliner Zeitung* to include her in a series on prominent society hostesses, Bella Fromm gags and persuades Bertolt Brecht to write the piece for her. Magda's secretary politely returns the draft with the directive that 'Frau Reichsminister Goebbels . . . does not desire the public to be told of her interest in

Can we get the list?

Scene.

Deti doesn't know about Mussolini. The Gestapo often cancels our major clients from our recognition of them.

1933

Buddhism.' A reference to her playing chess is also to be deleted.¹⁵

With the Frau Reichsminister, as the Goebbels Diary hints that of the first problems are arising. The honeymoon is over, and his life is to blame. After one frigid drive to Koblenz, he writes that he has sorted things out with her—'We were beginning to fall out. . . . She really is a sweet and lovely woman.'¹⁶ While omitting this private passage *Kaiserhof*, he does leave in their subsequent visit to Freiburg with Castle Hill, and old chestnut trees—surely a little subtle flagwaving Anka, whom he fondly imagines among the book's millions of read

In his view there is no room for women in politics.¹⁷ To his irrit however Magda becomes a patron of the new National Socialist Women's organization (N.S.V.), and a few days later she broadcasts on Monday Day.¹⁸ Goebbels angrily attends her inaugural reception for the N.S. at the *Kaiserhof*. His diary takes note only of the other gorgeous women there.¹⁹ When her millionaire ex-husband is arrested for tax evasion, Goebbels, jealous of their continued clandestine meetings, refuses to intercede; bail is set at four million marks (a million dollars).²⁰ On

May 10 he records tersely, 'Row with Magda.' He has told her while in that they should now add to their little family, and try this time something more useful, perhaps, than a girl.²¹ With the necessary still unperformed, Magda betakes herself and their infant Helga to a fashionable Baltic resort of Heiligendamm for the summer, leaving the little Doctor to cool his heels and ardor in Berlin for a while. Goebbels briefly joins her; he again brings several females with him. Among them, Bella Fromm learns, is the lovely Hela Strehl, a fashion editor at Scherl Verlag. 'Relations between Hela and Magda Goebbels records the journalist, 'are inevitably strained.'²²

June The Goebbelses' apartment on Reichskanzler Platz is now crowded, what with the chauffeur and burly S.S. bodyguards. At the end of June 1933 Hitler assigns Hugenberg's former official residence to them. It is a secluded little villa built in 1835 in an overgrown garden and shielded from the street—soon to be renamed Hermann-Görlitz-Strasse—by centuries-old trees. The villa stands next to the American embassy. Goebbels hands the villa's keys to Magda on July 1. She turns it into a fairy-tale castle, furnishing it with expensive antiques and a store in Nettelbeck Strasse. Two weeks later they can move in. After that Director Jakob Werlin of Daimler-Benz brings them a Mercedes motor car.²³ What more can the modern German mini-heart desire?

HIS propaganda ministry has a lavish budget from the first day. He boasted that it was going to cost the taxpayer nothing, and kept his word. It would have an income in fiscal 1933 of 10,737,500 marks (about \$2.7m at that time), largely from radio license fees. Its projected expenditure was 13,528,500 marks; the shortfall would be more than made up by the money, put at 4,247,000 marks, consequently saved by the merger of the interior, the Reich chancellery, and the foreign ministry.

Goebbels himself the ministry's budget provided an annual expense allowance of 4,800 marks plus a net ministerial income of 59,500 marks (around \$15,000). The 1933 budget also allowed 25,000 marks for the purchase of two automobiles for Dr Goebbels and Funk, as well as 190,000 marks for setting up provincial propaganda agencies, *Landespropagandaämter* (from 1937, Reich propaganda agencies); of these there would eventually be forty-one. A quarter of a million marks were set aside for enlarging the ministry building by fifty rooms, and eighty thousand marks for expanding its telephone network from seventy-four to 150 extensions.²⁴ His own instrument had over fifty pushbuttons coded in a kaleidoscope of colors: his ministry would eventually sprawl over fifty-four buildings in Berlin alone.

His corruption aside, he was a model minister. By enforcing economies on the Berlin radio network alone he would save one million marks and use this money for other cultural activities.²⁵ He regrouped the regional networks under one national radio authority. In his first months of office he replaced the top echelons in broadcasting with trusty Nazis and appointed the self-important and humorless Eugen Hadamowsky as national director.²⁶ Broadcasting prospered in Nazi Germany as in no other European country at that time. From four million listeners in 1933 the figure would soar to twenty-nine million in 1934 and ninety-seven million in 1939, with a corresponding leap in his license income. He was thrilled by the technological advances. At the annual radio fair he found himself telephoning with Siam, and with the captain of the liner *Bremen* on the high seas. People told him that television would follow within months.²⁷

A biography is not the place for a full analysis of the ministerial structure which Dr Goebbels created and ran. He changed its organizational chart frequently—an amorphous structure of vertical departments (*Abteilungen*) which split, subdivided, spawned, and coalesced again over the ministry's twelve-year existence. His office was large but not lavishly furnished, boasting only a desk, some bookcases, and a globe. He had selected tough young Nazis as his lieutenants and their verve, coupled with the bureaucratic skills of the senior civil servants, initially assigned by other ministries, ensured his success. Eighty-two percent of his initial staff came from outside the civil service; they were *Angestellte* (temporary salaried staff), not *Beamte* (permanent civil servants)—an important distinction.²⁸ Ninety percent were veteran party members. One hundred of his initial 350 staff members had the party's badge in gold.²⁹ He preferred revolutionary fervor to bureaucratic ability.³⁰ He promoted on performance, not age or seniority—Dr Werner Naumann, quick-witted, lean, and ambitious, would become his last Staatssekretär in 1944 at the age of only thirty-four.

At first there was a shambles as his erstwhile desperadoes and bare-knuckle streetfighters learned the ropes of government service. But they soon had the new ministry up and running. Most outstanding among his minions was Karl Hanke, not yet thirty: Buller-headed, dour, and

1933

handsome, he was put in charge of Goebbels' private (Ministerbüro). Goebbels persuaded the Cabinet to allow Hank civil service rank of Ministerialrat.³¹

Now Goebbels not only chose the game, he laid down the rules. the complaints?' he boasted to cheering Nazis at the Sport P explaining his new press laws. 'The foxes outsmarted the sheep, ar only right that the foxes now forbid the sheep to attack them.'³² Th professions in Germany were regulated was nothing new: There already a Literary Academy, of which Heinrich Mann was chair The Press Association had also existed before Hitler.³³ But with months Goebbels would force everybody working in the field of Ge cultural endeavor to toe the party line—from journalism, writing publishing right across the spectrum to the opera, theater, and film

Aug 14
Aug 24
On August 14 his diary first mentioned a chamber of culture.³⁴ cerned by Robert Ley's attempts to force all cultural workers int monolithic Labour Front, a month earlier Goebbels had written h to the Reich chancellery stating that he intended to establish s chamber himself.³⁵ He had set out his ideas to harness Germany's cr artists to the new National Socialist state in a memorandum to I three days later.³⁶ Hitler gave him the go-ahead on the Obersalzbe August 24.³⁷ This awesome governing body would become the uml authority for seven sub-chambers, controlling the press (presided by Nazi press baron Max Amann),³⁸ literature (Hans Friedrich Blu theater (Otto Laubinger), music (Richard Strauss),³⁹ the graphic (Professor Eugen Hönig),⁴⁰ film, and radio (Hadamowsky).⁴¹ chamber of culture dispensed considerable funds and subsidies, se up specialist schools, meeting welfare needs, providing legal aid, conducting professional examinations. Goebbels was its president; Funk vice-president; but the chamber's day-to-day management w the hands of the ruthless, ambitious and antisemitic Nazi Hans Hi with the equally rabid Nazi lawyer Hans Ernst Schmidt-Leonhardt : legal adviser. Full Jews could not belong; nor could anybody stripp German citizenship.⁴² Among the chamber's records was later fou

blacklist enumerating all those anti-Nazi writers and émigrés w membership was banned, including Dr Bernhard Weiss, Albert G inski, and 'Nahum Goldmann, eastern Jew, businessman, and agitat

The chamber of culture began operations on September 22. Ea its sub-chambers was further divided into *Fachschaften* and *Fachgrup* specialist chapels: The stage had forty thousand members, danc thousand, and light entertainment thirteen thousand. Each sub-chai was empowered to impose fines of up to one hundred thousand m Each such penalty was reviewed by its corresponding ministerial se and by Dr Goebbels himself.

Henceforth, German art was to be pure. The chamber of n prohibited the playing of atonal, 'Jewish,' and Negro music; surr art, cubism, and dadaism were among the prohibited genres. A formal dedication of the chamber of culture in mid-November is

1933

Berlin Philharmonic Hall Goebbels declared the old decadent, worm-eaten liberalism finished.⁴⁴ In an analysis of the 'ruling trio' in Nazi Germany, American ambassador William E. Dodd had no hesitation in nominating Goebbels as Hitler's 'first lieutenant,' ranking even above Göring. 'While Hitler is a fair orator as German oratory goes,' stated Dodd, 'Goebbels is a past master. He . . . has combined all the newspaper, radio, publications, and art activities of Germany into one vast propaganda machine.'⁴⁵

The Press Law (Schriftleitergesetz) enacted on October 4, 1933 abolished the principle of anonymous journalism.⁴⁶ It made journalists and their editors personally responsible for their writings. Henceforth the proper qualifications had to be earned either on the shop floor, starting literally as a compositor's apprentice, or on an approved university course in journalism.⁴⁷ The editor became a Schriftleiter, a true German word replacing Redakteur, which to Goebbels' sensitive ear had a Jewish ring. Jews were excluded here too, often with mortal consequences. 'My dear "Poulette",' wrote Bella Fromm in her diary, referring to journalist Vera von Huhn, 'has been so upset, as she's not wholly Aryan, that she's taken an overdose of Veronal. I am at my wit's end.'⁴⁸

Oct 4

GOEBBELS had always taken a close interest in the film industry. He moved swiftly both to expand it and to impose Nazi constraints on its members. In May 1933 he reached agreement with Dr Ludwig Klitzsch, general manager of the largest studio, Universum Film AG (Ufa), about setting up a film credit bank initially financed by the ministry.⁴⁹ Once again no Jews were allowed in the industry, and on October 19 the industry's chamber announced that it would not pass for exhibition any films on which non-members had worked.⁵⁰

May

Oct 19

Under his patronage the German film industry bloomed. Despite, or perhaps because of, the treasures that he and his ministry had lavished on them—the inflated salaries, the pensions, and the handouts when they fell on hard times—its members almost unanimously heaped calumnies on Goebbels after 1945. Secure in the knowledge that he was dead, they related bawdy tales of blackmail and rape in the hope of being regarded as the victims, and not the beneficiaries, of the Nazi reign. Cant and cattiness would distort the image of a man who was, admittedly, no saint. Only one actress, the beautiful Lida Baarova, would speak well of him (and still does);⁵¹ others would spread malicious gossip, charging for example that actress and director Leni Riefenstahl 'only made the grade by going to bed with Goebbels.' In self-defense Riefenstahl too talked unfavorably about the minister. 'I always was in bad standing with him,' she would confide to her captors. 'He was cold and forbidding toward me. I almost hated him.'⁵²

Five years younger than Goebbels, Leni Riefenstahl starred mostly in snow-capped mountain dramas. By her published account Goebbels, freshly arrived as gauleiter in Berlin, had hung around the 1926 première of her film *The Sacred Mountain* hoping for a glimpse of her; by his own

May 16, 1933

172 III: THE REICH MINISTER

diary's testimony, he saw her in 1929 starring in the mountaineering film *Piz Palu*, and found her a 'delightful child.'⁵³ He probably met her at Magda's society gatherings at Reichskanzler Platz in the autumn of 1919. In her memoirs she relates sharing a train journey to Munich with him in November 1932; he talked for hours of power struggles and homosexuality, before taking her along to see Hitler speak the next day. In his diary, Goebbels wrote of this train journey: 'Long talk with Schneé... He traveled to Munich with me and wants to speak with Hitler here. Arrived dead tired.' It is probably not too fanciful to suspect that his 'Mr Snow' was none other than Leni Riefenstahl.⁵⁴

Whatever ardor may have been concealed by the use of the pseudonym faded rapidly thereafter. In her 1987 memoirs she provided a lucid description of Dr Goebbels visiting her late in 1932 and forcing his attentions on her—of him kneeling before her weeping, of her crying out 'Go, Herr Doctor, go!'⁵⁵ On Christmas Eve, so her narrative continues, Goebbels arrived unannounced with two gifts for her—a red leather-bound first edition of *Mein Kampf* and a bronze Goebbels medallion. 'I am so lonely,' he moaned, explaining that Magda had just been rushed to the clinic: 'I fear for her life.'⁵⁶

Human memory of course plays harmless tricks. It suppresses, elicits, compresses, and inflates. But there was more. In May 1933, her memoirs relate, Goebbels persuaded her to drive him deep into the Grunewald woods, where he showed her his pistol ('I don't leave home without it') and then made a pass at her as she drove her car in a slippery slalom around the rain-lashed trees; as he put his arm around her waist, she hit a hummock and slithered to a halt, its wheels spinning. What had he intended? What indeed had she? The vehicle now immobilized, he limped off distraught in one direction, suggesting she head in the other.⁵⁷

The Goebbels Diaries, not always a monument to truthfulness, make no reference to any such undignified episodes. They did however record continued interviews and discussions with 'L. Riefenstahl' of a frequency now difficult to reconcile with the bodice-ripping tenor of her memoirs. She told him on May 16 of her production plans; he suggested a film about Hitler himself; Leni, 'inspired,' accompanied the Goebbelses to *Mad Butterfly* that evening. A few days later she picnicked with him and Hilmar at Heiligendamm.⁵⁸ Magda told her privately that she had married Goebbels only so as to be near to Hitler.⁵⁹ 'What of Leni's politics?' 'She is the only one of all the stars,' wrote Goebbels that summer, 'who understands us.'⁶⁰ Her name often cropped up in the diary, and in mid-August she spent the night at Heiligendamm with the Goebbelses again. Given all of this it is hard to visualize the further scene which her memoirs now describe—Goebbels invited her over that summer to suggest a film on the power of the press: He lunged at her breast, she dragged her feet, ran to the door and found a bell: By which she was saved.⁶² In September she made her first great film of the party's annual Nuremberg rally, a masterpiece which would be surpassed only by her second series film, 'Triumph of the Will.'

May 16

Scene

ALL of this is not to say that Dr Goebbels does not stray from the path of marital fidelity at all. He certainly dallied with Ello Quandt, Magda's unhappily married sister-in-law.⁶³ Signing autographs at the Berlin S.A.'s sports festival that summer, Goebbels points his pencil at a particular blonde. 'Find out her name,' he whispers to his adjutant. Police HQ provide the data he needs, and a few days later she is glimpsed traipsing down the red-carpeted marble staircase from the minister's private quarters.⁶⁴

Relations with Magda are strained. She has accepted the post of honorary patron to the Reich Fashion Bureau. It brings her into contact with the Jews of Germany's rag trade. When he orders Magda to resign, she sulks, and refuses to go down to the annual Bayreuth festival with him. 'If Magda doesn't mend her ways,' he grimly records, 'I'll have to draw some conclusions.' Hitler sends his private plane to fetch her. She makes her grand appearance after Act One, and the Führer negotiates a truce between them. A true pal, reflects Goebbels: 'He agrees with me,' he adds, 'women have no place in public life.'⁶⁵ After Wagner's *Valkyries* on July 25 the minister is summoned by phone to visit a Baltic baroness waiting at the festival restaurant. 'A fabulous woman,' sighs Hitler, and explains: 'The bolsheviks nailed her husband to the door of his house.' She has donated her fortune to the party. Now she wants to introduce Dr Goebbels to a friendly princess; the latter alas turns out to be a corpulent and elderly dowager. Since he makes no secret of his lack of interest, the princess declaims to Hitler loud enough for all the room to hear, 'Excuse me, mein Führer, but tell me: What do you think about adultery?' Cringing, Goebbels comments in his diary on how unpleasant Bayreuth has become.⁶⁶

On August 1 he exchanges his well-tailored party uniform for a white summer suit and begins a seaside vacation with Magda at Heiligendamm. He likes to nurse his Latin tan—even in winter he uses a sun lamp—but frowns on women who use such artificial aids. Once, sitting in his beach basket, he lectures the scantily clad beauties who swarm around him: 'The German woman does not bleach her hair.' The girls suppress astonished chuckles. He has not detected that his own wife is not a natural blonde. 'Since when have you worn lipstick, my sweetest,' he once asks her. 'Always,' she replies. (He does not believe her.)'⁶⁷

Leni Riefenstahl describes one scene which rings very true. At the chancellery one day Hitler commands her to report on progress with her film on the 1933 rally. She has filmed a few thousand meters of wooden, unconvincing footage of the event, but protests to Hitler that Goebbels and the party, who have their own agenda, have placed every possible obstacle in her way. Humiliated, Goebbels bawls at her afterward: 'If you were a man, I would throw you down the stairs.'⁶⁸ Working now at the party's command she completes the editing of this film, *Victory of Faith*, and is paid a director's fee of twenty thousand marks from ministry funds. The hour-long movie has its première at the Ufa Palace on the first day of December 1933, then vanishes for the next sixty years.

Sept 22, 1933

174 III: THE REICH MINISTER

THAT summer Dr Goebbels organized an outing of thousands of a mobiles along the land corridor through Poland to East Prussia. It was a clever propaganda exercise; the summer drive through Poland to an amputated German province with its rolling farmland where the fair Trakehnen thoroughbred horses were raised and its gaily decorated German towns like Rastenburg and Gumbinnen—names that still to find their shivering niche in history—was not without effect on foreign journalists.⁶⁹

Tightening his grip on the press that September he brought all advertising under the control of one advertising council, the Werberat. 'Advertising must be true,' his guidelines laid down. More important, a country swamped with six thousand different newspaper titles, enforced the first elements of standardization to enable even the small businesses to profit from advertising, using standard-size matrices. Newspapers were also ordered to publish honest circulation figures. These and other commonsense regulations would long outlive Hitler in modern Germany.

He also limped briefly onto the stage of international diplomacy. The League of Nations disarmament conference was to resume in Geneva, Switzerland, on September 22. Konstantin von Neurath, Hitler's foreign minister, suggested that Goebbels accompany the German delegation to explain and justify his anti-Jewish measures.⁷¹ On the eve of departure Goebbels told reporters: 'Germany does not want war. Indeed, we are in no condition for one.'⁷² Leaving by air from Rüdelsheim the next day he pointed out, 'It is the "pacifist" nations which always prepare for next war.' On the phone, Hitler advised him to deliver a cautious speech and Goebbels did as he was told. He dressed impeccably in a suit and striped tie just like the others; interpreter Paul Schmidt marveled at the speed with which the Nazi agitator adopted the local argot—within hours of his arrival he was speaking with all the oleaginous ease of a practiced Geneva diplomat.⁷³

At the suggestion of Baron Ernst von Weizsäcker, Hitler's envoy to Switzerland and one of the oiliest of them all, Goebbels was invited to meet lawyers and academic dignitaries. A professor of economics questioned the Führer Principle. 'You are probably a reservist,' Goebbels argued. 'If an enemy barrage is beginning, the *Führerprinzip* is your salvation. We Germans are under that barrage.'⁷⁴ The mood toward Goebbels was initially frosty. For various reasons Goebbels decided to address a press conference and not the general assembly. Although the Freikorps urged a boycott, three hundred journalists turned up to hear him in the mirrored salon of the Carlton Palace hotel. Nobody applauded when he rose, and very few when he finished speaking. This was not unusual in Germany. In his two-hour speech, pronounced in a serious, baritone voice, he reviewed the Nazi 'revolution' and claimed that eighty per cent would vote for Hitler in an election now. Justifying the concentration camps which the Nazis had set up, he invited any foreigner to inspect them.

Sept 22

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Turning to the Jewish problem, he trotted out the familiar figures about how the Jews dominated the medical and legal professions in Berlin, with similar figures for the press, literature, theater, cinema, stock exchange, and Reichstag. 'By settling the Jewish problem legally,' he argued, 'the German government has opted for the most humane method.' Nobody, he waspishly pointed out, had offered to absorb Germany's Jewish refugees.⁷⁵

A Polish woman journalist challenged him on Nazi Germany's lack of freedom of expression. 'You can't write what you want either,' retorted Goebbels, baring his teeth into a smile. 'But only what your publisher allows.'⁷⁶

The French foreign minister Joseph Paul-Boncour was impressed by the contrast between Goebbels' gleaming eyes and elegant gestures, and his misshapen physique.⁷⁷ Baron Kurt von Stutterheim, the *Berliner Tageblatt's* former London correspondent, told Anthony Eden that Goebbels reminded him of the Irish rebel leaders during the Troubles. 'There is a strong fanatical strain in him.'⁷⁸ All in all Baron von Weizsäcker felt that Goebbels had done a good job.⁷⁹

Sept 1933

22: Twilight of the Gods and Tally-ho

ONE DAY that September of 1933 twenty thousand well-dressed schoolchildren formed up in a Berlin stadium into a mass parade. In Germany, while clusters of smiling children standing out represented the lost German provinces of Memel, Danzig, and the Sudetenland. At a given signal Germany's frontiers opened to engulf these communities abroad, and the whole mass melted into a giant swastika. Goebbels told the youthful audience, 'wanted peace.'¹ At a ceremony marking the 250th anniversary of the first German settlement in America he spoke of a new era of understanding between nations.² 'I am calm over the Rhine,' he said at Bad Honnef a few days later, gesturing toward France. 'We want peace. We are ready to expunge the past.'³ On October, Hitler took Germany out of the League of Nations. On November 12 after a typical Goebbels propaganda drive ninety-three per cent of the German electorate voted their approval.

A campaign of anti-Nazi Big Lies began—many of them uncomfortable close to the truth. In London, the *Saturday Review* published a foreign article, attributed to Goebbels, demanding the revision of the German border at Poland's expense.⁴ In France, the *Petit Parisien* reproduced instructions which Goebbels had allegedly issued to his propaganda offices overseas, backing up these territorial claims; these too were a forgery.⁵ Fighting back, Goebbels took up an idea which the party propaganda office had already mooted as a fund-raising gimmick in 1931: an anti-Comintern, as the counterpart of the Comintern, the Soviet Union's international subversion agency. 'The Moscow Jews,' wrote Eberhard Taubert, head of his anti-communist section, in a later overview explaining Goebbels' tactics, 'had to be defeated with their own weapons.'⁶ Taubert's anti-Comintern plugged the seductive line that shevism was a Jewish swindle aiming for world domination, and Hitler was the only remaining obstacle. With the trial of the alleged Reichstag arsonists approaching, Goebbels told Taubert to publish documentation alleging that the communists had been plotting a *coup d'état*; the book, *Armed Uprising*, appeared a week before the Leipzig trial.

The Reichstag fire trial confronted Goebbels with a difficult conundrum. At the beginning of September a left-wing propaganda campaign in Paris had published a convincing *Brown Book of the Hitler Terror* accusing him and Göring of burning down the Reichstag, and listing 250 people allegedly murdered by the Nazis since then. One such alleged victim

Oct 1933

Dr Ernst Oberföhren, a D.N.V.P. politician (who had actually taken his own life in May).⁷ The book claimed that Goebbels had ordered his murder to silence him. He set his propaganda the task of establishing that Moscow lay behind the blaze. On October 10 the court came from Leipzig to Berlin to hear testimony. Göring testified on November 4, and Dr Goebbels four days later. Magda, with eye-shadow discreetly applied to her beautiful eyes and her blonde Aryan tresses gathered up beneath a black chapeau, as a court observer wrote in his notes that day, applauded vigorously as her husband testified: He did so, the same expert observer noted, in an extraordinarily suggestive manner—thus, when he appended the word *absurd* to a train of thought he did so in such a persuasive manner that no other verdict seemed conceivable.⁸ 'As a layman,' Goebbels stated, 'I cannot conceive how just one individual could carry out and execute the preparations for such an arson attack.' He reminded the court how often the communists had lied during the years of struggle—the Pharus Rooms battle, the drowning of Hans Kütemeyer, the defaming of Horst Wessel as a pimp, the Goebbels-Ulbricht debate.

Oct 1

The ultra-civilized word-duel that ensued between Ernst Torgler and Goebbels showed how similar their intellects were, as they banded rival quotations about the nature of revolutions. His clash with Torgler's fellow defendant the Bulgarian agitator Georgii Dimitroff was less urbane. After one stinging rebuff, Goebbels replied with a quotation from Schopenhauer: 'Every man deserves to be looked at. But he does not deserve to be spoken to!' (The quotation had been recommended to him in a letter tossed into his open Mercedes by an anonymous well-wisher the day before.)⁹

'I shall expect a loyal hearing from the foreign press,' Goebbels said, concluding his personal defense in terms of injured innocence, 'and I hope they will find space in their columns for this detailed rebuttal; because it is not right that the government of a decent, diligent, and honorable people should be smeared before the whole world like this.'¹⁰

WITH the domestic German press he had fewer qualms. His new press law kept the journalists tightly muzzled, although it was not without its positive elements as well. It imposed on journalists a duty to report truthfully and to refrain from writing anything that might 'injure illegally anybody's honor or well-being, or damage his reputation or hold him up to ridicule or contempt.'

Like all such attempts to regiment the liberal professions, ludicrous situations developed. The chamber of literature addressed warning letters to the Brothers Grimm for not having filled in membership forms (they had been dead for eighty years).¹¹ One Nazi censor banned an advertisement because it showed a girl clutching a bar of soap to a part of her anatomy 'which could not be identified for reasons of decency.'¹²

Operating through Max Winkler, who had a shrewd business brain, Goebbels began to buy up or close down printing and newspaper concerns, beginning with Hugenberg's Verlagsanstalt ('Vera') and Ullstein,

1933-34

1943

178 III: THE REICH MINISTER

the big Jewish-controlled newspaper publisher in Berlin.¹³ The R paid 8.5 million marks for Ullstein's stock, including two million liquidate Ullstein's debts. Goebbels renamed it *Deutscher Verlag*, purged its recalcitrant editors.¹⁴ When Ehm Welk, editor of the Ulls magazine *Grüne Post*, took too literally Goebbels' invitation to critic the minister shut the publication down for three months and reme Welk to one of Göring's new concentration camps.¹⁵ Through Winl Goebbels also squared accounts with the Jewish Mosse publisl empire, whose *Berliner Tageblatt* had been one of his most dedic enemies. Real-estate speculation had landed the owner Lachmann M in financial difficulties and he had already fled to Paris before H seized power; the sequestrators were more than pleased to sell off *Tageblatt* to Goebbels after they found that Mosse had plundered employees' pension funds. Winkler also acquired for him by more or forceful methods the share capital of the non-Jewish *Börsenzeitung*, Frankfurt *Generalanzeiger*, and Hugo Stinnes' *Deutsche Allgem Zeitung*.¹⁶

Jan 1

GOEBBELS' marriage is still faltering. On New Year's Day 1934 he dec that it's all over between them; but he relents because she is pregn again.¹⁷

He has all but forgotten Anka Stalherm. At the 1933 Nuremberg 1 he spotted her insufferable husband Mumme, now a middle-rank p dignitary.¹⁸ But now they are divorced and Goebbels hears she is g to the dogs—'Lost!' he records, 'What a comedown!' On his birth greetings come from her; in a typed reply, he mechanically sugg she drop in some time.¹⁹ The magic has gone. Besides, as overlor Germany's burgeoning film industry he has legions of willing, su starlets like Marianne Hoppe²⁰ and Käthe Dorsch²¹ at his beck and He will follow the rest of Anka's story with only half an eye. 'I Mumme tells me her woes,' he writes years later. 'She is to be pitied. what can one do?'²² She remarries; her husband dies in action. Ta pity on her Goebbels has her appointed editor of the fashion maga *Dame*. In an editorial she will fondly mention the book of ballads the minister lovingly inscribed for her as a fellow student at Heidebt by Heinrich Heine, the Jew. Goebbels has her reduced to the ranks mere staff writer.²³

1943

During 1933 he has earned 4,317 marks (about a thousand doll from his seven books in print.²⁴ He is almost pathologically prop personal money matters. He draws his salaries as minister and gaul but claims only his proper expense entitlements, not charging Mag car or their household overheads against the ministry. His tailorir equally punctilious. Gone is his clothes' slept-in look. He polishes shoes himself. He takes delivery of a motor yacht, and belatedly le how to drive a car as well.²⁵ 'I'll get the hang of it soon,' he w confidently in his unpublished diary on April 6. 'It's just the details still elude me.' At Easter 1934, as the time for Magda's confiner

April 6

1934

approaches, he rents a secluded, idyllic little property at Cladow on the Wannsee lakeshore.²⁶ She often accompanies him to lunch with Hitler now, and the Führer is a surprisingly frequent visitor to her in the clinic. Goebbels meanwhile pursues his old ways, inviting Hela Strehl and Petra Fiedler on boating jaunts on the city's lakes and waterways, and taking them back to the cottage for late-night private film showings.²⁷ On April 12 after a farewell meal with him Magda is taken off to the clinic for the birth of their second child. 'Hope it's a boy,' prays Dr Goebbels, only to open the next day's entry with a surly outburst: 'It's a girl and her name's Hilde. At first it brought disappointment, but then joy and happiness. . . . Once more the Führer has proven right. It's a little girl.'²⁸ The unhappy task of breaking the news to Goebbels has fallen to his adjutant, Prince Schaumburg-Lippe. 'If fate thinks it can play silly pranks on me,' snaps the minister, stalking up and down in irritation, 'it's got another think coming!' He hurries over to the clinic and finds Magda lying flushed but happy surrounded by pillows and flowers.

April

The rows resume. 'Armed truce with Magda,' Goebbels laconically notes in his diary after one two-day tiff which ends with him going for a little drive-around.²⁹ Documenting her irritation with him, Magda stays on with Ello at Dresden after he leaves. Out at Cladow on June 2 he plays with Helga, his favorite daughter, but his pleasure is alloyed by the presence of Magda's very plebeian mother. 'I'm cheesed off by all this,' he notes in his diary. 'I'm often very depressed. I've got to work harder.'³⁰ He falls seriously ill with worry, and there are more almost suffocating rows with Magda—a certain countess is the cause of some of them.³¹ On Wednesday June 20 the entire Reich government has been summoned out to Göring's new estate on the Schorf Heath, Carinhall, to witness the solemn reburial—'with much Twilight of the Gods and Tally-Ho,' as Goebbels sardonically puts it—of Carin Göring's remains, which have been violated in Sweden.³² Late that evening he is confronted by Magda with an ugly scene—perhaps about the countess. He puts a spin on it in his diary: 'In the evening I learn something awful from Magda. It's midnight, but I drive out to Cladow. Frightful scene. I am quite shattered.' The next day he keeps thinking of Magda: 'I'm fit to burst. Awful mental agonies.' Magda joins him later and dissolves into tears and hysterics. '*Au fond*,' he writes, setting the scene for future readers, 'she is good. I bear much of the blame too. A bitter pill to bite. A gray, rainy day today. Deep down, we have separated.' On Friday the twenty-third, a nervous wreck, he has a long, late discussion with the lovely Hela Strehl, then settles his differences with Magda. 'She finds her way back to me. But I am more than a little to blame myself.' History would of course like to know more about these differences: his infidelities? hers? We do not know and cannot speculate: But one lesson is that the Goebbels Diary is becoming more tricky as a source with each year that passes.

June
20.

23.

POLITICALLY too his quagmire deepened. Those who offended the minister joined Ehm Welk in concentration camp: There was Dr Jacob

1934

May 18

Wassermann, the Jewish nephew of the onetime director of the Deutsche Bank, sent to Oranienburg camp for slandering Goebbels and Maercker; there was an engineer who remarked casually that Goebbels was 'Czech many's hoodoo,' there was a former Stahlhelm official, convicted of insulting Goebbels.³³ 'Anybody may grumble,' mocked *Angriff* on 1 May 18, 'if he's not afraid of the concentration camp.' Operating primarily from the safety of Prague, the émigrés around Dr Bernhard Weiss orchestrated a raucous outcry about alleged Nazi atrocities: 'I claimed that two Jews had died in a pogrom at Gunzenhausen, and the former Social Democrat deputy Heilmann was being maltreated in the concentration camp. The stories were fictional, but fact would inevitably follow fiction.'³⁴ Ingeniously, the émigrés paraded a live Nazi 'victim' in Prague for pathologists to see his 'strangulation' marks. The Czech newspapers headlined this gruesome stunt 'ENTER A HANGED MAN.' (The Gestapo finally identified the alleged victim as a notorious communist confidence trickster.)³⁵ Goebbels reprimanded the Czech envoy, and Prague promised to silence the émigrés.³⁶

Goebbels was aware that even his powers were limited. When a Jew, Ebeling, asked him to get somebody out of prison, he refused. 'I'm not going to burn my fingers,' he noted privately.³⁷

THROUGHOUT this time he had turned a deaf ear to the growing international unrest generated by the inequities of the Nazi revolution. The S.A. was once again in revolutionary ferment, and he broadly sympathized. Hitler needed the regular armed forces more than he needed the S.A.; the party's two-million-strong Brownshirt army. Not caring to offend the stormtroopers he was putting out ambiguous signals which Goebbels was not alone in misinterpreting. Hearing Hitler declare to the assembled gauleiters in Berlin in February 1934 that there were still 'fools' around who argued that the revolution was not yet complete,³⁸ Goebbels nodded approvingly; he did not realize that Hitler was talking about the S.A.

1934

To Goebbels, the unseen enemy throughout the first six months of 1934 was the diehard *Reaktion*, a word which embraced the conservative politicians, journalists, intellectuals, reserve officers, and the Catholic clergy but never, it must be pointed out, the S.A.³⁹ 'The *Reaktion*,' he told a working-class audience in Berlin's Lustgarten, 'are putting on the right across the country. But if they imagine we captured these offices for *them*, or that we're just keeping them warm for them, they are very much mistaken.'⁴⁰

The young minister found strong support in the now expanding armed forces. Impressed by an ideological lecture in the defense ministry at the end of November 1933, the new minister General Werner von Blomberg had persuaded Goebbels to address officers based at Jüterbog; the official record shows that his remarks were greeted with 'storms of applause ending with a hooray for the minister.'⁴¹ He spoke too to officers in Dresden, Hanover, Kiel, and Wilhelmshaven.⁴² As tensions grew between the army and the S.A., particularly in Silesia, Blomberg asked Goebbels

1934

to arrange a second tour; but when he spoke in the Silesian capital Breslau on March 15 he insisted on the presence of the local S.A. and S.S. officers as well.⁴³ His fame spread among the army officers. In April he spoke in Frankfurt-on-Oder and Stettin. General Walther von Brauchitsch, the commanding general in Königsberg, persuaded him to address seven thousand of his officers and men too. To all of these audiences Goebbels explained the party's ideology, the nature of revolutions, the Jewish problem, and the relationship between the party, army, and state.⁴⁴

March

In all these speeches, slavishly adhering to Hitler's line, he confirmed that only the regular soldier had a 'sovereign right' to bear arms for Germany.⁴⁵ But he had nursed his own relations with the S.A. high command as well—ever since the Stennes putsch of 1930. Not for nothing had he appointed an S.A. officer, Schaumburg-Lippe, as his adjutant. For all his professed loathing of the homosexual cliques, he had learned to get along with Ernst Röhm and with S.A. Obergruppenführer Edmund Heines, the police chief in Breslau; indeed, he had testified during the Reichstag fire trial that he had spent a recent election evening with Heines roaring with laughter about the lies about them in the *Brown Book*.⁴⁶ Count von Helldorff, now police chief in Potsdam, was a regular cruising companion aboard his yacht.⁴⁷ On February 24 a glowing Dr Goebbels presided over a Sport Palace display by the Berlin S.A. at which the banners and uniforms of the prohibition era were paraded. 'Is the world to believe,' he intoned in his speech, 'that we have forgotten all of this? That all this was for nothing? No! The Führer knows, as do we all, to whom we owe this Third Reich.'⁴⁸

And why should he not utter sentiments like these? Hitler too was still fraternizing closely with Röhm. He had appointed him to Cabinet rank in December, written cordial New Year's greetings to both Goebbels and Röhm, and shared with both men his innermost thoughts on foreign policy during a train journey to Munich on January 1, 1934. If anything, Goebbels was marginally more critical of Hitler—impatient at his continued lethargy in foreign affairs and Reich reform. 'We're not making any headway at all,' he wrote in March. 'Hitler doesn't want to hurt anybody. But there's no other way.'⁴⁹ On the eve of Hitler's birthday in April, however, Goebbels privately prayed: 'God save our Führer. He's everything to us. Happiness, hope, and future.'⁵⁰ Goebbels could not overlook Hitler's infatuation with Röhm—perhaps his only protection in the increasingly shark-infested waters of the Third Reich. Goebbels used more old-fashioned methods to win Hitler's affection too: He donated 'a wonderful Bechstein' piano to him for his new official residence⁵¹ and brought him all the latest American movies, particularly those starring John Barrymore.⁵² Visiting Dresden for the national theater week at the end of May 1934 with his own new female outside interest, the beautiful dark-blond Baroness Sigrid von Laffert, Hitler would invite only the Goebbels couple to share dinner with them at the Bellevue hotel, and they stayed up until three A.M. talking politics.⁵³

Jan 2
1934

May
1934

May (1934)

182 III: THE REICH MINISTER

Goebbels had seen nothing wrong in fraternizing with Röhm. Wh wrangle had developed that spring between Magda and ex-hust Günther Quandt over the custody of Harald,⁵⁴ he canvassed Rö backing as well as Hitler's and Göring's, and he noted one ever 'Röhm makes a magnificent speech about the S.A.'⁵⁵ He had obvio still not singled out any one enemy. Late in April he tilted briefly at catholic church, warning its functionaries in a speech to eighty thous people in Düsseldorf: 'You gentlemen should not believe that you deceive us by wearing the mask of piety. We've seen right through yo Visiting Hitler with Himmler and Pfeffer on April 27, Goebbels interested only in securing decisions in his fight against 'sabotage' by church; he got Hitler to authorize a fight against the opposition Em ency League of Clergymen on Friday May 4.⁵⁷ But Hitler's heart was in it, and when Hindenburg now fell ill he urged Goebbels to go eas the church, as it would only cost the Nazis public sympathy.⁵⁸

On May 5 however he noted for the first time in his unpublished d that the S.A. were causing trouble in Berlin and elsewhere. He felt they lacked a clear objective.⁵⁹ Visiting Hitler on May 17 to discuss business, he found himself taken aside to listen to Hitler griping at Röhm and his personnel policies. Hitler mentioned too the homose scandals. Puzzled by this shift in emphasis to the S.A., Goebbels no afterward: 'Disgusting! But why isn't anything done about it?' Still fic dering, he went on to warn Hitler about monarchists. A few days l Count von Helldorff brought him more worries about the S.A.. 'Rö not doing too well,' wrote Goebbels. 'He's causing too many confli He's not on such good terms with the Führer either.' Goebbels decide at least for his diary's eyes—to stand by Hitler: 'He is our bulwark. must not despair.' On May 21, 1934 he mentioned his worries Magda—'About the situation and public mood. Neither all that r Magda,' he continued, 'is very shrewd and loyal to me.'⁶⁰ Twice May he had talks with Gruppenführer Karl Ernst, the doomed s commander in Berlin: After running into him on the seventh he no 'He acts very nice'—the emphasis being on the verb;⁶¹ on the twel sixth, after Ernst came to complain about friction with the regular arr forces, Goebbels recorded: 'I don't trust him any longer. He's a bit friendly.'

In Dresden the S.A. had staged a magnificent march-past for Hitler. Goebbels.⁶² But Hitler had already resolved to purge the S.A. leaders. Goebbels saw him on June 1. 'He no longer really trusts the s leadership,' he recorded. 'We must all be on our guard. Don't start fee too secure. Be prepared at all times. Nothing escapes the Führer's not ce Even if he doesn't say anything. Röhm [is] the prisoner of the men arou him.'⁶³

Goebbels opted for neither side. His own position was precarious. Unlike Himmler or Göring, he had no private army; he also had no friends. While in 1932, at a typical get-together of battle- and bot scarred party veterans in Berlin, Count von Helldorff's arrival had b

May/June 1934

greeted with silence, a 'storm of applause' had gone up before Goebbels could get inside the hall.⁶⁴ But his popularity now was substantially less. The Nazi minister of agriculture wrote scathingly of him in private as did Alfred Rosenberg, who noticed how the other gauleiters hated the commercial success of Goebbels' *Kaiserhof*.⁶⁵ Nobody liked his methods. Rosenberg wrote to Hess protesting that Goebbels would not allow him to broadcast, and was muscling into culture, which had been Rosenberg's territory for fourteen years.⁶⁶ On May 1 Hitler upset them both, by appointing the former gauleiter of Hanover, the suffocatingly narrow-minded Bernhard Rust, as minister for science, culture, and public education. Creating such rivalries was precisely the way that Hitler instinctively worked.

During June these rivals jockeyed for allies. Goebbels made common cause with Göring. He had noted that on New Year's Day Hitler had not written to the general at all ('out with him!' he had gloated).⁶⁷ He had also heard Hitler crack jokes at Göring's expense behind his back.⁶⁸ But now Hitler advised him to patch up his differences with Göring; he had read the proofs of *Kaiserhof*, and advised Goebbels to tone down one or two passages and insert a paragraph praising the general. 'It will be worth your while,' advised Hitler cynically.'⁶⁹ Evidently touched by the (published) references in *Kaiserhof*, Göring now wrote a conciliatory letter to Goebbels, offering him his friendship again.

A STIFLING gray uniformity had descended by now on the abashed and apprehensive German press. Acres of space were devoted to the obligatory reporting of Dr Goebbels' aimless and opaque speaking campaign during May 1934 against 'grousters and fault-finders, rumor-mongers and dead-beats, saboteurs and troublemakers.'⁷⁰ He flailed against ill-defined enemies in a speech delivered to fifty thousand Silesians at Gleiwitz on June 6, talking of the 'cowardly carpers at their beer tables,' and about 'the heroes who today are too elegant to go marching with an S.A. Sturm themselves, but stand on the curbside registering all their petty misdemeanors and excesses.'⁷¹ Among other specific enemies identified by him were the Center politicians and militant churchmen.

His campaign blundered on toward its climax—coincidentally set for June 30. His speeches still ignored the S.A., on the party's left, and lambasted only the *Reaktion* on the right, the churches, the conservative elite, the exclusive Herrenklub and its principal member the vice-chancellor Baron Franz von Papen. 'The Nazis,' wrote one shrewd American correspondent, seeking to rationalize Goebbels' puzzling campaign, 'know that they cannot stand still. Their movement is like a bicycle—if it stands still it falls.' He deduced that the Goebbels campaign was a smoke screen to cover a gradual cutback in the two million S.A. stormtroopers.⁷²

This was close to the mark. By early June Ernst Röhm was fostering talk of a 'second revolution.' Hanfstaengel would comment on how Goebbels had recently declared that the Nazi revolution was by no means

June 1934

over, and that 'reactionaries' would be swept away by the will of masses.⁷³ Perhaps Goebbels was hedging his bets—half conniving v Röhm, as once he had with Captain Stennes in Berlin. According to C Strasser, never the most reliable of sources, at some time during June 1934 Goebbels had a private rendezvous with Röhm in his 'local,' Munich Bratwurstglöckl tavern; Strasser's only evidence for this however the liquidation of Karl Zehnter, the bar's owner, in the corn purge. Goebbels certainly spoke in Munich's Künstlerhaus on June but his diary makes no mention of Röhm or the tavern.⁷⁴ The ubiquitous Bella Fromm also claimed that Goebbels met with Röhm that day. British diplomats went further: They learned late in June that Goebbels had been backing an attack by Röhm on the armed forces clique, hoping that Göring might 'finally be eliminated.' Later however he had been tracked, fearing to jeopardize his relations with Hitler.⁷⁶

ONE small episode during June 1934 showed that Goebbels was anxious to enlarge his personal reputation. Envious of recent visits of Göring to Italy and the Balkans, Goebbels secured an invitation to sit at the first visit by a member of Hitler's cabinet to Poland, although Poland was not the obvious choice.⁷⁷ His diary shows that Hitler was seriously alarmed at the prospect that an 'intransigent' France might invade Germany and prevent further violations of the Versailles treaty; Germany needed to ensure that Poland and Italy stayed out.⁷⁸

Goebbels flew to Poland for two days on the thirteenth to a chorus of protests from the country's socialist and Jewish newspapers (Jews made up one-tenth of Poland's and one-third of Warsaw's population). ~~Turning an invited audience including the Polish prime minister, Cabinet, and many ambassadors, Goebbels reassured them that National Socialism was not for export, and repeated that Germany desired no rapprochement.~~⁷⁹ He had consulted Hitler and foreign minister Baron Konstantin von Neurath closely on the text of this speech.⁸⁰ Afterward he drove round Warsaw, and saw the Jewish quarter ('stinking and filthy The eastern Jews. There they are.') He had meetings with Marshal Pilsudski and foreign minister Beck, then flew on to Kraków. At the same time Hitler had been to Venice to meet Mussolini on a similar mission.

Back in Germany Goebbels resumed his round of 'grouser' speeches in Freiburg ('I get quite nostalgic. Here I lived, loved, and suffered') at Gera.⁸¹ At Gera Hitler confided to him the outcome of his first talks with Mussolini:

1. Austria. Out with Dollfuss! New elections under a neutral rule of confidence. Influence of Nazis depending on number of votes. Economic issues to be resolved jointly by Rome and Berlin. Both agreed. Dollfuss will be notified.

June 1934

2. Disarmament: Mussolini fully endorses our position. 'France has gone mad.' He'll back us.

3. The East: we must build further on friendship with Poland. (*Vide* my visit). Seek a *modus vivendi* with Russia.⁸²

Hitherto unpublished entries like these give the Goebbels diaries a historical importance that far transcends their narrower biographical value.

ON their return to Berlin that evening Goebbels learned that Vice-Chancellor von Papen had delivered an amazing speech attacking him at Marburg university; Papen also spoke of the public's revulsion at the S.A., expressed veiled support for a monarchy, and sided with those whom Goebbels called the 'whiners and whiners.' 'A genius,' said Papen, in a pointed criticism of Goebbels himself, 'is never created by propaganda.' A transcript of Papen's words reached Goebbels' villa that evening. His adjutant found him in a blue dressing gown and a tantrum, hurling clothes-hangers downstairs. 'I'll teach this scoundrel a lesson,' he was screaming. 'Humiliating me like this!' On Hitler's instructions—or so he claimed in his diary—he ordered the speech suppressed at once. It was almost too late, as his ministry's foreign desk had already released it and the *Frankfurter Zeitung* had already plated it up. Annoyed that a junior minister had suppressed his speech, Papen threatened to resign. Hitler undertook to censure Goebbels.⁸³

The Papen speech was a slap in the face for Goebbels. On June 21 he presided over the monthly tea party for the foreign press and listened in delight to the Reichsbank governor Dr Schacht's witty speech; his grin vanished as Papen arrived uninvited, nonchalantly planted himself in Schacht's vacant chair just to his left, and sat nodding affably to the journalists.⁸⁴ He repaid Papen at his gau's midsummer festival that night in Neukölln, delivering another speech against the ludicrous armchair critics who had been too weak to seize power themselves.⁸⁵ Although he mentioned by name the Crown Prince, whose hand he wrongly suspected behind the Marburg speech, the foreign journalists recognized his real target as Papen. Hitler told him on the twenty-second that he had seen through his vice-chancellor: 'He's caused himself a heap of trouble.'

For the next week Goebbels continued to fulminate about Papen and the Marburg speech—to Ruhr coalminers, to Berlin civil servants, and to his diary. Papen enjoyed every minute of Goebbels' discomfiture. Sunday June 24 found them both at the Hamburg Derby. According to Papen's account, when the more expensive racegoers sighted him, sporting a light gray top hat, there were cheers of 'Heil Marburg!' Goebbels, pink-faced and piqued, flaunted himself before the cheaper galleries; the workers' applause turned to cheers when they sighted Papen however. 'This fellow Papen,' Goebbels told his deputy gauleiter Görlitzer, 'is getting too big for his boots.'⁸⁶ Thus Papen's account; Goebbels' unpublished diary puts a very different spin on the episode: 'Derby. One

June
21

24.

big mess. Public sharply against Papen. Hard put to avoid a scandal. Ambassadors there. Embarrassing scene. At the end together with Papen. Public totally on my side. I walk right into their midst. These ovations. Poor Herrenklub, if it ever comes to the crunch.⁸⁷ Licking his wounds and seeking scapegoats, the next day Goebbels had the entire racecourse management sacked.⁸⁸

On June 22 he had delivered his stock speech against the *Reaktion* to a gigantic audience of two hundred thousand in Halle.⁸⁹ He repeated the theme at Duisburg and Essen on the twenty-fourth. 'There are,' explained at Essen, 'the *reserve officers*, the *intellectuals*, the *journalists*, the *clergymen*. You need a sharp eye to detect this type of person. . . . The public has got to see through this clique.'⁹⁰ These words caused uproar among those classes thus branded by Goebbels. After the coming blows events showed that he had been way off-target, he was forced to say what he called an 'unabridged' text of what he had said, making plain he was referring only to those who *put on the airs* of reserve officers, intellectuals, journalists, and clergymen; he had not been referring to the worthies themselves. He had had no intention of attacking the actual people named, only the renegades whom they had already cast out of their ranks.⁹¹ If all of this verbiage proved anything, it was that Goebbels still had no idea of which of many windmills he was supposed to be tilting at.

HITLER had his sights on clearly defined if very different prey. Deferring to the regular army generals, he had decided to decapitate the S.A. June 22 he summoned Viktor Lutze by plane from Hanover, swore him to secrecy, and told him that the Gestapo had informed him that Röhm was plotting against the 'reactionary' Reichswehr on the pretext that he was conspiring against the Führer and the S.A. He was going to remove Röhm, he said; Lutze, a reliable if colorless S.A. commander, was to stand by for orders.⁹²

Goebbels knew nothing of any S.A. 'plot.' His target was still Franz von Papen.⁹³ 'There is a ferment afoot,' he wrote on June 27. 'The Reichswehr is not quite clean. Führer's too good-natured. Hess has made a good broadcast, against revolution. Siding strongly with Führer, veiling attack on Papen. Latter's calmly carrying on his intrigues. His [Marburg] speech was drafted by E[dgar] Jung.' Compromising letters, Goebbels learned, had been found. 'We must watch out. If things get critical, tighten the hard.'⁹⁴ Lunching at the chancellery on June 26 he found Hitler the alert too.⁹⁵

After gossiping with Hitler on Wednesday June 27, Goebbels left engagements in Kiel. He was still none the wiser. Writing that Friday he would recall vaguely that the situation had deteriorated. 'The Führer must act. Otherwise the *Reaktion*'—which he still did not identify—'has got out of hand.'⁹⁶ In Kiel he found 'universal concern about the *Reaktion* and 'embitterment within the Reichswehr.' The public, he felt, was waiting for them to do something. Flanked by his adjutant Schaumburg

June
27.

June 1934

Lippe, himself an S.A. Sturmführer, Goebbels delivered his stock 'whinger' speech to eighty thousand people in and outside the North Baltic Hall in Kiel.⁹⁷

Back in Berlin later that Wednesday he again noted that Papen's seditious Marburg speech had been written for him by Jung, whom the Gestapo had now arrested.⁹⁸ Later Karl Hanke brought him the latest equally seditious catholic pastoral letter. 'Now,' wrote Goebbels, still wholly misjudging Hitler's intentions, 'let's go for them.'⁹⁹

Hitler had gone to Essen for Gauleiter Terboven's wedding to Ilse Stahl, an old flame of Goebbels'. He was on the brink of committing his first mass murder. On Thursday Goebbels took the afternoon off at Cladow. 'Gloomier and gloomier,' he recorded, adding the vague and helpless comment: 'The *Reaktion* is at work everywhere.' After a cruise with Magda and the children out on the summery lake, he went downtown to speak at Spandau. 'Talked tough and grim,' he said. 'The people understand.' He drove back out to Cladow. 'How much longer?' he exclaimed in his diary, writing the next day as the uncertainties suddenly began to clear.¹⁰⁰

June 28, 1934

23: Inkpot Hero

To consolidate his absolute authority, Hitler was about to become a murderer, and Goebbels would finally cast his lot in with him. They suddenly needed each other urgently: Hitler feared Goebbels might yet rally the S.A. against him—for they were in plotting an uprising, though not yet; Goebbels for his part had so many enemies that he felt safe only at his Führer's side. P 588

In Essen strange things were happening that Thursday June 28, 1934. Lütze saw Hitler called away from the wedding feast to the telephone. A clammy atmosphere, an atmosphere of mistrust, descended on the festivities. Lütze felt that people were setting Hitler up.² More phone calls came, from Himmler, from the Gestapo, and from Paul Körner in Berlin (Körner presided over Göring's nationwide telephone-tapping monopoly, the Forschungsamt).³ Hours later, dapper and businesslike Körner arrived in person, bringing more reports. These indicated that Röhm and the S.A. were planning to put Hitler at four P.M. on Saturday. Hitler snapped: 'I'm going to make an example of them!' He phoned Röhm's adjutant at Bad Wiessee, and ordered a meeting there at eleven A.M.

With Hitler in the Ruhr, Dr Goebbels felt very vulnerable, but the Führer had not forgotten him. On Friday morning June 29, 1934, he phoned Dr Goebbels from Essen and summoned him to the Hotel Dreesen at Bad Godesberg that evening. ('Thus,' sneered Alfred Rosenberg a few days later, 'he was allowed to join the big boys.')

'So—it's on,' Goebbels wrote, probably quoting Hitler's words, though still in the dark about precisely what it was.⁷ 'In God's name!' he added. 'But anything is better than this awful waiting.'⁸ Hitler also ordered a new private secretary, Christa Schroeder, twenty-five, to fly with him to Godesberg in Goebbels' plane.

Goebbels, wearing a lightweight white summer coat, was met by a local Nazi gauleiter Grohé at the airfield. 'We've got to act,' agreed Goebbels—whose unpublished diary of these days' grim events has been obtained by this author from the secret Moscow archives: it shows him taking a detached interest in the massacre, thrilled to be so close to the killing though relieved not to have wielded the murder instrument himself. Goebbels drove to the Hotel Dreesen, followed by Hitler ('a very grim') at four P.M. Shortly, Viktor Lütze also arrived. Lütze and Goebbels had been friends since the early days in the Ruhr. Other veterans

June 30, 1934

INKPOT HERO 189

Nazis gradually crowded onto the hotel terraces. Hitler, noted Goebbels, told him in detail what was going on. To his astonishment he learned that the Führer was about to act the next day, Saturday, not against the conservative *Reaktion*, but against Röhm and his Brownshirt rebels. Not for a moment did he betray his dismay that Hitler was proving more reactionary than the *Reaktion* itself. 'Drawing blood,' recorded Goebbels approvingly: 'Gotta realize that mutiny costs them their neck. I agree with this. If do it you must, then ruthlessly. Proofs that Röhm was conspiring with [the French ambassador] François-Poncet, Schleicher, and Strasser. So, action!' Goebbels recalled: 'After reaching his decision the Führer is very calm. We pass the hours in discussions. Nobody must notice a thing. Talk with Lutze, the new [S.A.] chief of staff. He's very good.' For a while they watched a tattoo by the Labour Service. As six hundred torchbearers marked out a fiery swastika on the far bank of the Rhine, they watched the sun set, and waited in Hitler's suite. 'The Führer,' noted Goebbels, 'is tense but very firm. We all keep silent.' Toward midnight there was a phone call from Berlin—both Lutze and Goebbels recorded it. 'The rebels are arming themselves,' wrote Goebbels. 'Not a moment to be lost.' Hitler went pale, and announced: 'We're on our way.'¹⁰ Goebbels sent a message to Magda to take the children from the Cladow cottage to the safety of their ministerial villa in Berlin; he ordered police protection for them.

It was now June 30, 1934. Shortly before two A.M. their plane took off for Munich. The broad outline of subsequent events that Saturday is well known. Hitler informed Goebbels of his intention to arrest Ernst Röhm and the mutinous S.A. commanders; Goebbels, prudently, decided to say nothing on their behalf. After touching down at Oberwiesenfeld airfield at four A.M., Hitler received further alarming reports from the army and S.S.—Röhm's rivals for power—that in Munich and Berlin S.A. units had been alerted hours before and had ordered a full mobilization for that afternoon. Panicked by these (probably exaggerated) reports Hitler took his party to the Bavarian ministry of the interior building. Here he stripped two sleepy-eyed S.A. generals of their badges and sent out S.S. squads to pick up other S.A. commanders from their hotels and trains on their arrival. Gripped by paranoia he announced that he proposed to set off at once to arrest Röhm. In three open Mercedes limousines the size of small trucks, provided by Gauleiter Wagner, he and his posse sallied forth at five-thirty A.M.—Hitler, Lutze, and Hess riding in the first car, a bunch of detectives in the second, and Goebbels and one of Wagner's men in the third.

Out at Wiessee Röhm was vacationing in the lakefront Hotel Hanslhauer. He was awakened in his Room 21 by Hitler himself, a loaded pistol gripped in his hand, screaming: 'You are a traitor!' Goebbels and Lutze said nothing as Röhm, ashen-faced, was led away. They found Edmund Heines, aged thirty-six, sharing Room 31 with a youth, which made it easy for Goebbels to draw odious conclusions. ('May I be excused,' he would say in his broadcast the next day, 'from rendering a

1934

description of the loathsome and almost nauseating sights that met our eyes.' He wrote in his diary: 'The chief was brilliant. Heines pitiful. With a rent boy. Röhm remained calm. Everything went off very smoothly.' Heines too was dragged away, he appealed: 'Lutze, I've done nothin. Help me!'

A chartered omnibus took away the arrested S.A. officers. Hitler's limousine convoy followed, making a prudent detour to the south in case the S.A. had summoned help. Safely back at party HQ in Munich, Hitler ordered the codeword phoned through to Göring in Berlin to trigger the purge in Prussia. Later that morning, addressing a bewildered audience of middle-ranking S.A. officers, he laid it on thick about Röhm's murky financial dealings, his opulent HQ in Berlin, and his treacherous dealings with an unnamed 'foreign power.' To those around him he revealed that some of the arrested men were to be shot. The Gestapo showed Lutze a list of names; Lutze thoughtfully noticed that several were already marked with an X. Hitler proposed however to spare Röhm, a former close friend. He argued that there was no justice in sparing Röhm if others were to be executed. Lutze, asked his view, evaded clear comment.¹¹ Röhm's view however the only one not checked on the list of seven names which Hitler handed at five P.M. to Sepp Dietrich, commander of his S.S. bodyguard. The six others faced a firing squad at Munich's Stadelheim prison late that day.

Goebbels' contribution to these shocking events is not recorded. This had been mirrored in Berlin. Operating from Göring's villa, Himmler, Göring, and the army's general Walter von Reichenau had settled many old scores while Blomberg and General Werner von Fritsch looked from time to time. Franz von Papen had been spared—to Goebbels' annoyance—but he learned that afternoon that Papen's speechwriter Edgar Jung and his senior aides Herbert von Bose and Erich Klausener had been shot in cold blood and that Berlin's S.A. commander Kurt Ernst had been shot by firing squad. The orgy of murder had embraced even General Kurt von Schleicher, Hitler's predecessor as chancellor and Gregor Strasser, once Goebbels' most powerful rival in Berlin. 'Strafgericht,' was his only terse comment: judgment day. At eight P.M. he flew back to Berlin with Hitler. Witnesses said that he looked at death as their Junkers plane landed at Tempelhof airfield two hours later. Göring met them and nonchalantly told Hitler he had somewhat expanded on the original hit list. Hitler was not pleased by this. 'Göring reports that all went to plan in Berlin,' recorded Goebbels. 'Only copy: Mrs Schleicher bought it too. Tough, but can't be helped.'¹³

Back at the chancellery, Hitler vanished to take a bath, after which revealingly told his secretary, 'Now I feel clean as a new born baby again!'¹⁴

edwards
D.T.

July 1.

THE NEXT day, Sunday July 1, 1934 Goebbels found that Hitler's reputation had soared.¹⁵ But over lunch he found the Führer pale and consumed by bitterness. 'Göring tenders his report. Executions almost on

1934

A few still needed. It's tough but necessary. Ernst, Strasser, Senle [Stempfle?], Detten †. One final sweep and we're through the worst. It's tough but can't be avoided. For twenty years there must be peace. He spent the whole afternoon with Hitler. 'I cannot leave him on his own,' reported Goebbels. 'He's suffering badly, but hanging tough. The death sentences are pronounced with the utmost gravity. Around sixty all told.'

Yielding to his more bloodthirsty colleagues' pressure Hitler ordered his friend Ernst Röhm—still in a Munich prison cell—added to the list. 'Twice,' recorded Goebbels, 'Röhm is given twenty minutes alone with a pistol. He doesn't use it and is then shot. With that, it's all over.'

~~Goebbels~~
Goebbels
+ 1/2

That evening Goebbels broadcast his own version worldwide for twenty minutes his own version of the purge. In the script he placed himself carefully right at the Führer's side throughout—in intimate, unchallengeable proximity. He spared no nasty detail about Röhm & Co. They had brought discredit to 'our S.A.,' indeed: 'They were about to bring the entire party leadership into disrepute by their sordid and disgusting sexual abnormality.' Hitler had lanced the abscess, he said; nor did he stint his praise for the S.S.¹⁶ 'The Führer was very nice to me and Magda,' observed Goebbels in his diary. 'As was Göring, who was around all day.'

A stream of fresh news. [Sepp] Dietrich reports on the executions. A bit white about the gills. We're not cut out to be executioners.' On Monday July 2 Hitler told him the final toll of executed was sixty—'terrible losses,' wrote Goebbels, without explaining the adjective; Hindenburg however had sent a 'fabulous' telegram, congratulating Hitler on having saved Germany. 'For God's sake,' recorded Goebbels, 'let's have an end to the shooting. And the S.A. must not be too humiliated, above all not by the police.'¹⁷ He returned to this theme, his concern about the S.A., several times in his diaries.¹⁸ Relaxing with Count von Helldorff later that evening at the Goebbels villa, Hitler sighted Goebbels' adjutant Prince Schaumburg-Lippe in his S.A. uniform and asked curiously: 'And where did you spend Saturday?' The prince replied that he had been on duty at the ministry. 'You're lucky,' remarked Hitler. 'I doubt I could have spared you otherwise.'¹⁹

Jul
2

In Cabinet on Tuesday July 3 Hitler explained that firm action had been necessary, and took full responsibility for 'forty-three' executions. General von Blomberg, speaking for all of them, welcomed his action. Goebbels said nothing.²⁰ Papen arrived halfway through, belatedly released from house arrest—'quite broken,' observed Goebbels without sympathy, 'pleads for mercy. We all expect him to resign. His men have all been shot. Edgar Jung too. He had it coming to him.' They enacted thirty-two laws that day, all garbage in his view, and a mockery under the circumstances.²¹

July
3.

He traveled to Kiel and told audiences of gauleiters, naval officers, and sailors what he knew about the Röhm affair—which was not much. Back in Berlin on the sixth, Hitler told of his visit to the ailing president. Hindenburg, recorded Goebbels, had been a real sport. Papen was to stay in office until September 15, and then be turked out (abgemeiert)—

July 6, 1934

July 6.

Scene
The
press
drumming
thunder

'There must be no suggestion he was one of Röhm's men.'²² He hearing fresh details about the death roll. '[Karl] von Wechmar was too,' he wrote indignantly on July 6, referring to the S.A. Brigadeführer in Breslau. 'Terrible! A lot of things happened that did not entirely agree with the Führer's will. Fate! Victims of the revolution! You learn to ti

little of human life, once it gets lost like that.'²³ Hitler flew down to the Obersalzberg. In his absence wild rumors swept Berlin and the foreign press. According to one of them Goebbels had ordered five young S.A. men executed in his ministry garden had directed his staff to watch.²⁴ Less implausible was the story Goebbels had had Röhm's villa raided and staged an exhibition of spoils in his ministry—delicately holding up silk lingerie and perfumery sprays for his staff's inspection. One rumor had Goebbels personally ordering Strasser's murder. The gullible foreign journalists named the nine other victims who were, as Reinhard Heydrich indignantly protested later to Goebbels, still very much alive, including Helldorff, Alvensleben, Manfred von Killinger, Lossow, Seisser, and the widow of Karl Ernst (Goebbels offered Helldorff command of Berlin's S.A. but warned him to stop putting on airs.) As the foreign press hysteria grew loud Goebbels noted nervously: 'High time that the Führer speak and announce that the lists of those shot and the heaps of documentary evidence are being checked and will be publicized. Meanwhile: Tuttle deaf ear, and keep our nerve.'²⁶ Since Hitler delayed speaking, Goebbels broadcast a diatribe against the British, French, and Russian newspaper stories—'the direst kind of revolver-journalism,' he exploded, drawing on his characteristically inventive vocabulary.²⁷ Stung by his language, at their next ministerial tea party the normally hard-bitten foreign journalists in Berlin wept into their teacups with rage and, as Louis Lochner wrote it, nobody minced their language in speaking to Goebbels. 'I don't think he'll invite us to teas hereafter!'²⁸

GOEBBELS rejoined Magda out at their lakeside cottage at Cladow. He was plagued by fears of assassination.²⁹ Both needed a vacation. He

too came out to Cladow several times that week. 'He now sees things quite clearly,' recorded Goebbels cryptically, adding: 'Lutze has become suspicious too.'³⁰ Did this mean that Hitler now believed that he had been manipulated, as he had, by Göring, Himmler, and the army forces?³¹ On July 7 Goebbels and Helldorff made a Sunday day trip to Heiligendamm.³² On the thirteenth Hitler spoke to the Reichstag about the purge. Goebbels, Göring, Hess, Lutze, and their respective wives gathered round the exhausted Führer that evening and congratulated him.³³ The next day Goebbels and Hitler drove up to Heiligendamm. 'Putzi' Hanfstaengl, who had just returned from America, found them there. 'Hitler,' he wrote years afterwards, 'had a flushed, look, as though gorged on the blood of his victims.' It was not a pleasant vacation. The crowds gawked and cheered them wherever they went, so they had to break off their stay.³⁴ Later that year Magda invited

July 7.

1934

widows of all the S.A. victims of the purge to bring her their Christmas lists; one widow wrote a touching thank-you: 'The Führer loves justice,' she wrote. 'So he will look after us too.'³⁵ His conscience troubled, Hitler ordered generous pensions paid to them.

Di. Ti. on ~~line~~
Att ~~conscience~~
Conscience

HITLER had begun to plot against his neighbor, Austria—he mentioned it at lunch on July 10.³⁶ Although he would protest his innocence in later years, there is no doubt that he was fully apprised of the coup being prepared by Austrian Nazis under Theo Habicht. Habicht claimed army backing for a plot to replace the dictatorial chancellor Dr Engelbert Dollfuss with Dr Anton Rintelen, a prominent right-wing politician. Goebbels' unpublished diary shows that he considered Habicht a hothead whom Hitler, with characteristic indecisiveness, was hanging on to far too long. When Habicht brought the latest news on Austria on April 10, Goebbels again decided 'He's obviously not up to the job.'³⁷ After discussing Austria with Habicht and Haegert two weeks later Goebbels noted: 'We'll be intervening there more strongly now. Otherwise dilettantism rules.'³⁸ Intervene—but how?

July

Attending Bayreuth for the annual Wagner festival on Sunday July 22, he found Hitler conferring secretly with Habicht, Rosenberg, General Walther von Reichenau, and the former S.A. commander Franz von Pfeffer. They had decided to stage a coup in Vienna. In his diary Goebbels inked the terse comment: 'Will it come off? I'm very skeptical.'³⁹ For three days they went their normal ways: Hitler entertained Goebbels and the others by reading from his Landsberg prison notes, and talking of the past; once they all went for a picnic in the forests. Back at the Wagner household, Goebbels had a little scene with Magda, whom he caught 'snooping' through his mail.⁴⁰

22.

The coup was to take place the next day, Wednesday July 25. General Wilhelm Adam, army commander in Bavaria, was ordered to report at nine A.M. on Wednesday morning to Bayreuth, where Hitler boasted to him that the Austrian army was going to overthrow the Dollfuss government that day: Adam was to arm all the Austrian Nazis who had fled to Germany. The army general was also deeply skeptical.⁴¹

Scam?

July
25.

Goebbels was with Hitler as the first reports came in from Vienna. Things were soon going badly wrong just as he had feared: 'Big rumpus. Colossal tension. Awful wait. I'm still skeptical. Pfeffer more optimistic. Habicht too. Wait and see!'

The word was that Habicht's Nazis had seized Dollfuss and his minister of the interior Emil Fey in a scuffle. Hitler put through endless phone calls to Berlin, because lines to Vienna were dead. At three P.M. he phoned General Adam: 'Everything is going according to plan in Vienna,' he lied. 'The government building is in our hands. Dollfuss has been injured—the rest of the news is confused as yet. I'll phone again.' He never did; he and Goebbels listened to Wagner's *Rhinegold* that afternoon with only half an ear. Then came uglier news: Dollfuss had been shot dead, and the rebels were pulling out. 'Habicht was all talk,' decided an

Aug. 1934

outraged Goebbels. 'I just manage to suppress a crazy communiqué Pfeffer.'

Pfeffer and Habicht were very mute after this. Goebbels switched the propaganda ministry over to emergency damage control. The foreign ministry in Berlin blamed the German ambassador in Vienna and recalled him. 'Führer remains quite calm,' observed Goebbels. 'Casting no plans. Dollfuss is out: That's a serious blow to the Austrian regime.' They tore up their remaining Wagner tickets and returned to Berlin the next day.⁴²

Mussolini—who had secretly approved the idea of ousting Dollfuss—was infuriated by the murder, and moved his army to the Austrian frontier. The Italian press waded into the Nazis. Goebbels ordered the press to hit back. Hitler was angry that Mussolini had changed his tune. 'It's all over with Italy,' Goebbels decided. 'The same old disloyalty. The Führer has washed his hands of them.'⁴³ As a blood bath began in Austria, he persuaded Hitler to dismiss the bungling, cynical dilettante Habicht; if not actually shoot him; Papen was sent as special ambassador to Austria. The assassins would be publicly hanged in Vienna.

Meanwhile, on July 27, Hitler spoke to Goebbels about the future: He has a prophetic vision, wrote the minister. 'Germany as master of the world. Job for a century.'⁴⁴

LATE on July 30 word came that President von Hindenburg was dying. Hitler and Goebbels discussed what to do. 'Immediately he died,' recorded Goebbels, 'R.W. [armed forces] and Cabinet will appoint the Führer as successor. Then Führer will appeal to the public.'⁴⁵ The Cabinet agreed this late on August 1; Goebbels co-signed the decree. Early that day Hitler had gone to take leave of the aged field marshal as he had phoned that afternoon as Goebbels was planning the state funeral. He had found Hindenburg still alive—the president had recognized the chancellor, spoken of his gratitude and affection, then mistaken him for the Kaiser and referred to himself as 'your reverent and humble subject'. Goebbels broadcast news of Hindenburg's death on August 2.⁴⁶ Listened to the chaplain's endless eulogy at the funeral ceremony in Tannenberg, Goebbels decided: 'No parson will ever speak at my grave.'⁴⁷

Hitler's appointment was to be confirmed by a plebiscite on the nineteenth. Goebbels revelled in controlling the giant new propaganda machine, but found the results disappointing. Some thirty-eight million Germans, just under ninety percent nationwide, with rather less in Berlin, had endorsed Hitler as head of state.⁵⁰ The Catholics had let them do the murder of Klausener had alienated many Catholics, but Goebbels blamed Rosenberg and his tactless anti-Catholic effusions of late.⁵¹ In his imagination Goebbels saw the 'missing ten percent' glaring at him, and for the next three months he drilled into his staff the need to win them over too—all, that is, except the 'anti-social dregs and professional beaters' who were incurably hostile to the regime anyway.⁵²

Broad sections of the S.A. were deeply disaffected by what Hitler had

July 27.

July 30.

Aug 1.

Scene

Aug 2.

Scene

1939

done. S.A. brigadier Richard Fiedler, Horst Wessel's old comrade in arms, pleaded that the party had got the S.A. all wrong.⁵³ Goebbels hardened his heart against them. Twice that summer, addressing them in Berlin, he justified the 'radical cure',⁵⁴ the 'purgative'⁵⁵ which had been necessary among their leaders. But both he and Hitler were long racked by remorse after the massacre. Hitler suffered from insomnia and a ringing in his ears which he attributed to those killings, and he ordered generous pensions for the purged men's next of kin.⁵⁶ Goebbels took up the cause of the S.A. men who had died in earlier years, protesting to Martin Bormann, who ran the party's benevolent fund, that some S.A. men's widows were drawing pensions of only seventeen marks (four dollars) per month, while Geyer's widow had received nothing at all.⁵⁷

His own finances were in better shape. At the end of October 1934 he paid cash for a swanky new five-liter Daimler-Benz tourer.⁵⁸ His ministry's budget for fiscal 1934 projected a revenue of 22,341,250 marks from radio license fees, against outgoings of 27,545,300 marks. His own pre-tax salary and allowances would total 72,900 marks (around \$18,000).⁵⁹ And why not? He had worked hard that autumn, limping around the country addressing uniformed farmers (seven hundred thousand of them arrayed like soldier-ants on the slopes of the Bückeberg for the Nazi annual harvest festival), uniformed roadbuilders (who serenaded him with their specially composed Ballad of the Spade), uniformed Hitler Youth, and uniformed Nazi maidens with blonde pigtails and uniformly glistening eyes.⁶⁰

In Hitler's new Reich everything was uniform, especially the press, and Goebbels knew it. Lecturing journalists in November he mocked at their monotonous output and lack of courage, as though he himself were in no way to blame.⁶¹ Captain Wilhelm Weiss, deputy editor of the *Völkischer Beobachter* and head of the Press Association, would explain later that it was Goebbels' own draconian press laws that had reduced its fifteen thousand journalist members to gibbering servility.⁶² The fire had gone out of the media. It needed an identifiable, flesh-and-blood enemy. With the Jews now fled or fleeing, the protestant church emerged slowly to fill the role. One village church had disobeyed Goebbels' order for bells to toll when Hindenburg died. The pastor had told local party officials, 'I don't take orders from Joseph the catholic.'⁶³ This attitude was symptomatic of the church problem. 'A nation of sixty-six millions,' said Goebbels at Stettin, 'cannot afford twenty-eight different churches'.⁶⁴

Speaking at Trier a few days later he suggested that only National Socialism had a truly Christian program, as witness its Winter Relief fund.⁶⁵ He had launched this Winterhilfswerk fund in September 1933; after glowering at the sumptuous farewell repast for guests at Bayreuth that summer he had there and then decided that millions of Germans could easily forego one meal each month and donate the proceeds to a national fund to feed and clothe the poor.⁶⁶ Only the churlish would deny the real benefits that this WHW fund brought to the hungry and unemployed. In the winter of 1933-34 it had raised 358,136,040-71

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the radio
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Sep
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1934 - 35

196 III: THE REICH MINISTER

marks, and helped 16,617,681 needy Germans, almost a quarter of the population.⁶⁷ His motives were of course partly political. Émigrés, he warned party officials in Cologne, were banking on the collapse of the regime during the coming winter.⁶⁸

Dec 13

Goebbels had cast his lot permanently with the Führer. Hang together or be hanged separately: The saying is much the same in German. On December 13 his pathological dependence on Hitler was documented again when Hans Frank told him that Hitler believed he might be dying and caused the Cabinet that same afternoon to pass a law allowing him to name a successor.⁶⁹ 'He thus seems to be assuming the worst,' recorded Goebbels, shocked. 'I am very downcast. I go home weighed down with worries. . . . We've got to find a good doctor. The Führer must be brought back to good health. The people around the Führer are too lackadaisical. At Bremerhaven the next evening however he found Hitler looking well. Words failed him, he was so relieved. 'Our Führer! Long, long may he live!'⁷⁰ On the nineteenth Hitler nominated Göring as his successor, 'kept it to himself and a few others—not including Goebbels. A few weeks later, discussing how to compensate Göring for taking the Reich reform program away from him, Hitler told Goebbels he was 'thinking' of nominating Göring as his successor. Goebbels could not even bear to think of that sad eventuality. 'Hitler's got to outlive us all,' he pleaded in his diary. 'We need him like our daily bread.'⁷¹ That Christmas Hitler wrote to Goebbels, telling him how dear he and Magda were to him.

WHAT of Goebbels' private life during that turbulent year, 1934? As Reich minister, he is a magnet for Berlin's nouveau-chic society; he is a host of dazzling starlets, and less frequently their male counterparts. His motor yacht cruises the Wannsee with Magda and a glittering array of twittering females of stage and screen in its wake, like Renate Müller, Lil Dago, Jenny Jugo, Gretl Slezak, Maria Andergast, and Magda's sister-in-law Ello, who says she's being dragged through a messy divorce by her husband's cunning Jewish lawyer.

Sept

Ello is all eyes and ears. Once that September her friend Maria Starn makes a bitchy comment in Magda's hearing about Petra Fiedler, another of the minister's friends. 'Female hysteria,' he scoffs guiltily in his diary. The ensuing row with Magda leaves him aggrieved and sleepless for a week afterward.⁷³ For a while Magda shuts her ears to Ello's gossip, mindful perhaps of her eccentric pre-nuptial bargain with Joseph. In his office, however, their separate bedrooms are divided by an ante-room and bathroom. One night that autumn she hears a door banging in the wind; going to close it, she finds the connecting bathroom inexplicably locked. The next morning she hears Joseph softly unlocking the door. She makes no secret of this to Ello, and over breakfast she icily informs his house guests of the certain countess, 'My car will be taking you to the station in half an hour.'⁷⁴

Jan 1.
1935

She punishes him in a subtle but cruel way. To see in the New Year 1935, she drags him down to the Black Forest—on a skiing holiday.

1935

goes off skiing all day, leaving her lame husband with the infants and a nanny at the hotel.

to keep him company Hitler's press chief sent down to the Feldberger Hof hotel a senior journalist, Dr Alfred Detig, with instructions to let him win every hand at cards. Detig's newspaper, the *Deutsche Allgemeine Zeitung*, had just carried a critique by Furtwängler of Goebbels' recent persecution of the composer Hindemith.⁷⁵ 'Do you know,' snapped Goebbels arrogantly, 'why we allow the *DAZ* to keep publishing? It's because if you've got a plague of rats you always leave one or two holes open to see which rats peep out. That way you can trash them better.'

He was facing, unfortunately, a man with literally a better hand of cards than his. By lunch time Detig had taken him to the cleaners. As the gong sounded and Goebbels made to leave, Detig detained him. 'Minister,' he said, holding out his hand, 'gambling debts are always settled on the nose.'

Goebbels forgave him—temporarily. While Magda went off skiing, he took his friends down into Freiburg to see his old university. He refreshed nostalgic memories of Anka and Castle Hill, of Dattler's, and Berlinger's coffeehouse. In one lecture theater he pointed out a limerick he had carved into a bench fifteen years before: 'The maiden and the inkpot / Get their rims wet quite a lot. / What's the source of all that damp? / All that dunking—scamp!'

Smirking naughtily he went off to record his New Year's Eve broadcast. Years later, Detig would ponder upon the minister's tortured psyche: For the two hours that they had trailed this little cripple around with them he had taken such pains to convince them that while at university here he had been a real 'Inkpot Hero' too. How much was true, and how much propaganda? As for the Furtwängler incident, Goebbels had Dr Detig arrested by the Gestapo for sedition and he spent several months in their Munich prison cells.⁷⁶

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24: While Crowds Exult below

Nov

WHEN you drive through Germany today,' Goebbels had said at the end of November 1934, 'you hear the hammering of the machinery and the singing of the sirens, you see the cargo ships once more majestically gliding down the rivers and the heavy-laden freight trains, and you notice how the country lanes are being widened and the new autobahns laid down. . . . These are great times that we have created.'¹ Before a different audience he emphasized Germany's 'absolute desire for peace,' a theme to which he returned in his New Year broadcast—the coming international plebiscite on the disputed Silesian territory would allow Germany to arrive at a lasting peace with 'the grateful French people.'²

Hitler had faced the New Year with a collapse of self-confidence. Recalling Goebbels back from his Black Forest vacation, he demanded he do something. Foreign newspapers were full of lies about fresh plots against him. Hitler ordered the entire German leadership to hear him speak in the state opera house on the third. Together, Goebbels and Göring—now thick as thieves again—drafted a declaration of loyalty for Göring to read out to Hitler. It went down well.³ At one point Hitler threatened to put a bullet in his own brains if his subjects refused to work in harmony.⁴ Goebbels was worried by all this. He felt that Hitler was still unwell, and decided to find a doctor for him. 'I think he needs rest now,' he told his unpublished diary.

With Magda staying down in the Black Forest, he stayed up until 1 a.m. after the Hitler speech entertaining Ello Quandt; on the following day, January 4, he took Hitler out to Babelsberg to tour the Ufa studios. For a while he, Hitler, and Streicher strayed around the lavish set built for 'Barcarole,' a romantic film located in Venice at the turn of the nineteenth century. The top Nazis were all eyes—not for Germany's leading headliner, Gustav Fröhlich, but for the actress playing opposite him, a Czech girl of twenty, Lida Baarova.⁵

Hitler took an immediate shine to her; he persuaded himself that she looked like Geli Raubal and invited her to tea at the chancellery.⁶ She arrived with tear-streaked cheeks. Gustav Fröhlich, her lover in real life as well as on the screen, a jealous and possessive thirty-two-year-old, had instructed her to phone him every fifteen minutes from the Führer's chancellery, and that put paid to that. Hitler asked Lida why she did not take up German citizenship. Her reply was simply, 'Why should I?'⁷

Dec 1934

WHILE CROWDS EXULT BELOW 199

Upstairs in his private quarters a few days later, Hitler moped until three A.M. about how lonely and joyless his life now is—'Without women,' observed Goebbels, 'without love, still filled with memories of Geli.'⁸

same

DISCUSSING foreign policy after that visit to the film studio on January 4, 1935, Hitler predicted to Goebbels that France would start turning the screw on Germany if and when she lost the Saar. They had a tough year ahead.⁹ Goebbels adopted honeyed language. 'In rapprochement lies order,' he lectured, opening the Saar exhibition in Berlin on the sixth. 'In war lies only ruin and destruction. For Europe there can be no third way.'¹⁰

Jan
19.

The historic plebiscite on the future of the Saar would be held one week later. His opponents, a clamoring ragbag of communists, Jews, freemasons, and disgruntled émigrés, were no match for him. His propaganda line was clear—the Saar was tied by blood to the German fatherland. To abide by the international rules, a local *ad hoc* 'German front' had to fight the campaign. Goebbels provided a weekly illustrated magazine, telling the catholic Saar electorate that the bolsheviks were the sworn enemy of God. In neutral Geneva his ministry's anti-Comintern unit set up a religious front, Pro Deo, which formally received the anti-bolshevik exhibition that he had prepared in Berlin and sent it on to the Saar camouflaged with Swiss certificates of origin.¹¹ In the Saar, the catholic clergy publicized the exhibition from their pulpits. 'The Saarbrücken clerics never guessed whose errands they were running,' wrote Eberhard Taubert.

His opponents warned the Saar, 'A vote for Germany is a vote for Hitler!' This slogan backfired badly, because over 90·5 percent voted just that way. Hitler telephoned Goebbels from Berchtesgaden, saying he sincerely hoped this meant peace with France. Goebbels had all Germany decked out with flags in an instant. That evening, January 15, he took Generals Blomberg and Fritsch back to his villa, and they all phoned Hitler again. Afterward, they all discussed Germany's long-range foreign policy.¹² Word reached London a few days later that Goebbels had said on this occasion that the overwhelming Saar vote virtually obligated Hitler to bring back *all* the scattered German peoples into the Reich. Goebbels had particularly indicated Memel and Austria. 'We've got everything ready in the propaganda ministry,' he was quoted as saying.¹³

The Saar plebiscite was proof of what could be achieved bloodlessly, by propaganda alone. On Sunday January 20 Hitler again had lengthy confidential discussions with Goebbels, mapping out his next moves: 'First project concerns Britain,' recorded the diarist Goebbels. 'Guard their empire, in return for thirty years' alliance.'¹⁴

At the time such a deal seemed quite possible. There was a mutual fascination between Britain's old, and Germany's new, rulers. In December 1934 Goebbels and Hitler met Lord Rothermere at the Ribbentrops. The British newspaper baron was already a convinced admirer of Hitler. 'A real Englishman,' Goebbels described him. 'John Bull.

Really wonderful opinions. If only all the English thought the same way. Rothermere applauded Hitler's rearmament and demand for colonies and criticized Versailles and diplomats. Britain's ambassador in Berlin the hard-drinking Sir Eric Phipps, almost swooned with rage. A Goebbels got to work on him, Rothermere pronounced him 'the great propagandist in the world.' 'If you get tired of Germany,' Rothermere boomed, 'I'll engage you at ten times the salary.' 'I'm not for him,' responded Goebbels, and reported the remarks to Hitler.¹⁵ The Führer threw a glittering party for his lordship on the nineteenth. Magda, the star attraction. From Rothermere's remarks, it was plain he was totally won over to the Nazi cause.¹⁶ Traveling down to Munich

Jan 25.

January 25 Hitler repeated to him that the cornerstone of his foreign policy was an alliance with Britain. 'We shall be supreme on the ground and they at sea, and we'll be equals in the air.' What then? The fact that Hitler talked of wooing Poland—that would now be Göring's task—indicated expansion to the east.¹⁷ R-an

Feb. 24.

Speaking to eighty-seven thousand Nazi officials on February Goebbels boasted: 'If the great powers ... now treat Germany as a sovereign nation again, don't think for an instant, my comrades, that means the world has come to its senses! No, it's thanks to our tenacious resolution, and—I shall be blunt—our newfound *Macht*, our power alone.'¹⁸

POWER

Rosenberg choked on that word *Macht*. He, Rosenberg, was head of the party's office of foreign policy, he complained that this 'saber-rattle' by Goebbels contradicted Hitler's own theme, the desire for peaceful coexistence.¹⁹ Hitler however trusted Goebbels. When Sir John Simon, the British foreign secretary, announced a visit to Berlin Hitler asked Goebbels as well as Ribbentrop to supply a character study on him. Increasingly sure of himself, the propaganda minister saw no need to curry favor. He dominated Hitler's lunch table with cruel banter and mimicry—imitating Robert Ley or Otto Meissner, then saying with disarming chuckle: 'But we've got to be kind to poor old Meissner—he did so much to help us into power.'²¹ Some found Goebbels infuriated by 'His smirking superficiality gets *physically* on my nerves,' wrote Darré after one such chancellery luncheon.²² At times Goebbels even guffawed for Göring—nagging about the new general's indiscreet fling with actress Emmy Sonnemann until Hitler coerced them into marrying May, and then revealing the staggering cost of the nuptials to Hitler before whispering around the diplomatic community that Emmy's Austrian pedigree was debatable.²³

THE armed forces, Germany's muscles, were now beginning to show. Goebbels' unpublished diaries, recently discovered in the Moscow archives, narrate Hitler's next crucial decision:

MARCH 16, 1935 (Saturday). On Friday the Führer suddenly returned. Says he wants to proclaim general conscription today

1935

[Prime minister Pierre-Etienne] Flandin has spoken against Germany in the chamber; two-year national service accepted in France. Disarmament? We too have to create *faits accomplis*. Hitler is right. I shall fortify him in his intent. . .

MARCH 18, 1935 (Monday). Discussions all Saturday morning. Führer argues with Blomberg over the number of divisions. Gets his own way: thirty-six. Grand proclamation to the people: Law on rebuilding the armed forces; conscription. To put an end to the haggling, you've got to create *faits accomplis*. The other side aren't going to war over it. As for their curses: Stuff cotton wool in our ears.

Marc

Cabinet 1:30 P.M. Führer sets out situation. Very grim. Then reads out the proclamation and law. Powerful emotions seize us all. Blomberg rises to his feet and thanks the Führer. Heil Hitler, for the first time in these rooms. With one law, Versailles is expunged. Historic hour. Frisson of eternity! Gratitude that we are able to witness and take part in this.

'So once more we are a great power,' concluded Goebbels. At four P.M. that afternoon he broadcast the proclamation over the radio.²⁴ The foreign press displayed consternation and panic as Germany announced the reintroduction of conscription. Rome and Paris bleated protests. 'Let them curse,' wrote Goebbels smugly; 'we rearm . . . and put on a brave face meanwhile.'²⁵ Speaking in Danzig, he bragged openly that the Nazis had torn up the treaty of Versailles.

Sir John Simon hurried to Berlin with Anthony Eden, Minister for the League of Nations, to ascertain the German government's intentions. Goebbels attended the banquet thrown in their honor, and found Simon congenial but Eden cold and arrogant, as he had already warned Hitler from his own sources (contradicting Ribbentrop).²⁶ 'Immediately afterward with the Führer at the Reich chancellery,' narrated Goebbels in his unpublished diary. 'Göring and Blomberg too. Führer reports; he has given the British a few figures: we want an army of half a million, and we've already achieved parity with the British in the air.' (This was bluff.) 'Huge astonishment at that. Führer spoke out against Russia. Has laid a cuckoo's egg which is intended to hatch into Anglo-German entente.'

Eden had silkily suggested that the 'bolshevik world revolution' was a Goebbels fiction, and promptly flew on alone to Moscow, which rather devalued his talks with Hitler.²⁷ Unabashed, Goebbels printed a special horror-magazine, *The Red Army*, and had it smuggled onto the desks of every delegate to the League of Nations in Geneva.²⁸

For a few days Hitler feared that Eden might pull together his own eastern pact, signing up Moscow and Warsaw against Germany.²⁹ He remarked to Goebbels that he found foreign affairs pure torture. Strolling in the garden on April 3 he told the propaganda minister that he did not believe there would be war. 'If it came it would be frightful. We have no raw materials. We're doing everything to pull through this crisis. . . We've got no choice but to keep our nerves. Poland has stood fast. No question

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202 III: THE REICH MINISTER

of [Eden's] eastern pact. . . . Führer says, let's just hope nobody jumps on us.³⁰ Goebbels was alarmed that irresponsible elements were speaking of war as though it was a bagatelle. Aided by Hitler's adjutants Wiedemann and Julius Schaub he saw to it that Hitler was left in doubt; General von Fritsch also instructed his adjutant Major Hossbach to brief Hitler about their army's true weakness.³¹ Speaking in Frankfurt however Goebbels gloated over the fact that Germany 'rearmed secretly, cunningly, and unknown to the world outside,' a British consul reported on April 11. The minister left this diplomat with the unedifying impression that 'a homicidal lunatic, with winks and whispers and sudden shouts, was propounding his dark schemes to a somewhat bovine but gleeful audience.'³²

Goebbels was beginning to take on the great names in German culture. He forced Wilhelm Furtwängler to eat humble pie and concede that the state's right to control art.³³ After Rosenberg had bombarded him with letters for a year complaining that composer Richard Strauss used the libretto of Stefan Zweig, a Jew, for his latest opera, Goebbels had to dismiss Strauss as president of the chamber of music.³⁴ He absented himself from the opera's première, and had it taken over by a program at Heiligendamm where he was on summer vacation.³⁵

He was also increasingly sensitive to criticism. In May 1935 Gestapo drew his attention to one cabaret, the Catacombs, in Lustgarten Strasse. Agents reported the subversive sketches of comedian Walter Finck, but Reinhard Heydrich reminded S.S. chief Heinrich Himmler that their own *Völkischer Beobachter* had only just praised this act, that Finck had been a star performer at Goebbels' recent film festival. Goebbels sent his own adjutant to spy on Catacombs and a similar establishment, Tingel-Tangel, in Kant Strasse, and closed them down a few days later.³⁶

GOEBBELS gets to know Magda better; she tells him about her life, and of it like a stage play.³⁷ Pregnant again, in January 1935 she takes two children out to Cladow.³⁸ Late in March he begins a costly month-long reconstruction of his official residence at taxpayers' expense. The finest craftsmen are employed.³⁹ At the same time he carps about the lavishness of the Göring wedding staged on April 10. 'Two events in the world hold its breath,' he mocks in his unpublished diary on wedding eve: 'the conference at Stresa, and Göring's wedding. The world of reality, and the world of fantasy. Let's hope the fantasy-world one stands up to the blows dished out to it by the real one.' It is as though he can see Göring's hour of failure coming. As Berlin goes crazy next day with thirty thousand troops lining the streets and throngs cheering the wedding couple, Goebbels turns melancholy thoughts back to his little country wedding at Severin: He is not envious at all, he decides but happy as can be. Unable to get Carin Göring out of his mind, he accompanies Magda to the nuptials and the following seven-course banquet ('an impressive picture for the starving') through whisper-

and finger-pointing crowds; the embarrassment is just one more cross he has to bear.⁴⁰

Magda is momentarily quiescent, sunning herself in the Führer's affections. Hitler often comes out to Cladow and goes cruising with the minister across the lake to see Potsdam's trees in blossom, listening absently to Goebbels' litanies against their turbulent priests and their arrogant Jews. Hitler finds it hard to get worked up about the Jews, now that he is in power.⁴¹ At other times the Cladow villa is filled with brainless chatter as Goebbels invites over actresses like Angela Sallocker and again the gorgeous Jenny Jugo, currently filming the Elisa Doolittle role in George Bernard Shaw's *Pygmalion*.⁴²

Magda Goebbels' family world revolves around her children—Joseph grumbles once that she has forgotten to make Easter a bit nicer for him too.⁴³ He takes a month-long seaside vacation at Heiligendamm, leaving her in Berlin. Indifferent to her feelings, he invites stage actress Else Elster (Helldorff's mistress) and film starlet Luise Ullrich to join him.⁴⁴ Ever present is Ello Quandt, who arrives with her nubile friend Hela Strehl. 'Both very nice,' Goebbels records circumspectly, 'and clever and good-lookers too.'⁴⁵ When Hitler joins this beach party for two days Magda comes too—only to return to Cladow abruptly.⁴⁶ Goebbels writes in his diary the words 'fond farewell' but there has in fact been a ghastly scene about which Hela at once advises diarist Bella Fromm: 'She [Hela] has little brains and even less gumption,' records Fromm, 'but all the more charms for Mr Goebbels which she readily displays to him. She went up to Heiligendamm with him, his wife and children and female secretaries—of which two or three are always among his lady friends. From what one hears,' recorded this Jewish gossip-writer, her newspaper outlet now capped, 'Frau Goebbels did not know about it beforehand and departed suddenly after a violent row—not that either Hela or Goebbels were the least upset.'⁴⁷

Goebbels' diary is not surprisingly oblique about these goings on. He returns to Cladow on July 30. The mood is hostile. 'Magda is crying,' he tells his diary. 'I can't help it.' Magda, now very heavily pregnant, puts him through the wringer. Goebbels enters into a discussion of 'this disagreeable topic' and at once regrets it. 'She's never going to change,' he notes mysteriously.⁴⁸ A few days later, he tackles her again and she promises to watch her tongue in future, particularly in the presence of Ello, who 'squawks' far too much in his view. The matrimonial tussle continues all summer, his diary seesawing between references to Magda and three-year-old Helga as 'both so sweet,' and entries like: 'Talked things over with Magda. We don't really see eye to eye any more. But things will probably get better after the birth.'⁴⁹

Her confinement lasts for two weeks, while her jealous sister-in-law feeds her details of Joseph's alternative pursuits, i.e. Hela Strehl. He takes Ello sharply to task. 'I rebuked her to her face about her loose tongue and she felt very small,' he writes, and adds the significant conclusion: 'Now it's all over between us. Never mind!'⁵⁰ Even at the maternity clinic

|| D.T.

1935

there is another colossal row with Magda about Hela—he blames Elle but they kiss and make up. A few days later when he takes the unquestionably beautiful Baroness Sigrid von Laffert back home to the refurbished villa, he finds Magda there—unwilling to stay at the clinic although her labor begins the next day.⁵¹

Oct 2.

On October 2, 1935, she gives birth to a boy. She calls him Hellath after her tragic love, Günther Quandt's firstborn son. 'A real Goebb face!' triumphs Dr Goebbels—as though there might be some doubt. In fact his paternity as the years pass is undeniable—the flattened temple, the receding forehead, and even the hint of an overbite. Hellmut Goebbels grows to a solemn, slow-witted mutt of nine, 136 centimeters (four feet six inches) tall, with no greater recorded ambition than to become a Berlin subway driver, a source of constant worry to his father, who can see how his sisters—eventually there are five of them—are spoiling him.

Oct 22.

True, Hellmut's arrival does restore matrimonial peace, but only three weeks. After a protracted session with actress Jenny Jugo on October 22, 1935, the diary records Goebbels as working late; he is accordingly subjected to an 'endless paraver [sic]' by Magda, 'who puts to me,' wearily writes, 'her views on marriage and family.'⁵⁴ One Tuesday a month later the same diary glimpses Miss Jugo wailing that one of her lesser films is likely to be canned. On Wednesday he liaises with her, 'Perhaps her film can still be saved,' he records afterwards.⁵⁵

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His lifestyle is decorated, if not enriched, by this chattering throng of women passing through his portals, not all of whom are even pretty. 'Young poetess Käthe Summer,' he remarks to his diary after she leaves, adding the scandalous generalization: 'Why do brainy women all have to be so plain?'⁵⁶ Of his own good looks he has no doubt. He willingly allows photographers, artists, and sculptors to portray, paint, and cast his likeness, 110 pound, five-foot-four frame, immaculately uniformed, for posterity.⁵⁷

Image is everything and Goebbels, the only Nazi leader with a family, works hard on his. It is his daughter Helga who hands Hitler the posy of flowers on his birthday. Twice in 1935 she is cover girl on illustrated magazines. A week after Hellmut's birth Goebbels speaks at the Harz thanksgiving festival at Bückeberg in the Harz. Three hundred thousand farmers' throats roar their congratulations—or so it seems to his diary. Less cordial receptions are not recorded for posterity. He finds himself booed and hissed by Berlin's discarded S.A. veterans, invited to meet them at the Friedrichshain halls, scene of many a pitched battle. He begins jovially, 'I hope I've not blundered into a meeting of émigrés by mistake' but the whistling only gets worse and he orders the radio microphone switched off.⁵⁹

Dec

Shining through his diary's pages is his affection for his eldest daughter Helga. December 1935 finds them both rattling Winter Relief collection boxes for the assembled media outside the Adlon hotel.⁶⁰ He dutifully spends Christmas with the family at the Oberhof ski paradise; he does not omit to send gifts to Anka, but increasingly he prefers escorting me

1935

exotic women like Hela Strehl, Ello Quandt, and Jenny Jugo to the opera and theater.⁶¹ In January 1936 he makes this note: 'I want to find a role for Miss [Ilse] Stobrowa'—an up-and-coming Berlin actress. These are trivial and no doubt innocent pursuits, but they bring problems in train which he talks over exhaustively with Magda.⁶² There is a clue to what kind of problems when he complains to Hitler about Himmler's secret police: 'This loathsome snooping has got to stop,' he writes. 'Above all into one's most private affairs.'

Jan 193 scene

Hitler promises to ask the minister of posts whether any Reich ministers are being wiretapped, against his orders, and to prohibit check-ups on hotel rooms.⁶³ But it will take more than the Gestapo to stay Goebbels' roving eye. A batch of new secretaries is introduced to him that March. 'One of them,' he adds laconically, 'is usable.'⁶⁴

A LENGTHY mid-life crisis was beginning. One day in 1935 death knocked loudly on his door. At midday on August 20 he heard a rumble from where a subway tunnel was being excavated just outside his villa. Before his eyes the crane and several trees on the far side sank out of sight and the excavation caved in amid blues flashes from short-circuiting cables. Goebbels phoned Hitler and had the site managers arrested. He spent many hours watching the rescue operations and brooding about the nineteen missing workers, trapped 'cold and rigid' below ground. Several of the bodies were laid out in his garden—a sight he would not easily forget.⁶⁵

scene

He asked Göring to look into his own pension rights. Looking at the cracks wrought in his own walls by the cave-in, he had seen the first fissures in his own immortality.⁶⁶

HUGE sums of money were now at his disposal. The ministry's revenues were swollen by the box-office receipts from the opera house in Charlottenburg.⁶⁷ He took a firmer hand in the struggling film industry and particularly in expanding its domestic market. Film exports had previously covered forty percent of production costs, but now, with the increasingly effective worldwide Jewish boycott, barely seven percent.⁶⁸ He accepted without rancor that American productions were often superior. The Americans had Greta Garbo, and his passion for her had not dimmed. But he now had directors like Leni Riefenstahl—'A woman,' he gasped, reeling from their latest encounter, 'who knows what she wants!'⁶⁹ Her international award-winning documentary of the chilling, spectacular, drum-thumping 1934 Nuremberg rally, *Triumph of the Will*, had been premièred in Munich in March and would go on to become one of the greatest propaganda films of all time.⁷⁰ Goebbels set aside 1.5 million marks to finance a Riefenstahl epic on the approaching Olympic Games. The 1936 Games, he decided, should become a showcase for National Socialism.⁷¹

His propaganda techniques were subtle and oblique. He directed that films were to convey no explicit party message: merely portraying happy family life in Nazi Germany would suffice. Musicals proliferated. 'Operate

1935

206 III: THE REICH MINISTER

seemingly without purpose,' he directed Hadamowsky, criticizing government radio's obtrusive politicking: 'That's far more compelling

This being so, his continued indulgence of Julius Streicher, publisher of the crude tabloid *Stürmer*, is hard to understand. The party and Rudolf Hess demanded a ban on the newspaper. But Streicher enjoyed Hitler's personal backing, which gave him immunity from the normal press sanctions—until he published a scurrilous item about Emmy Göring. Then Hitler ordered *Stürmer*'s suspension. 'At last,' rejoiced Goebbels. But after Streicher delivered a particularly crude speech in the Spandau Palace that August he decided that he was 'a great guy' after all. The newspaper was frequently 'pure porn,' he agreed, but Streicher himself, gauleiter of Nuremberg, was 'a character and man of principle.'⁷⁴

Stürmer's favorite ploy was to publish items exposing people who had done favors for Jews.⁷⁵ If anything redeemed Streicher in Goebbels' eyes, it was this antisemitic crusade: It made him a useful ally at a time when as the Nazis felt, the Jews were beginning to throw their weight around again. In mid-July 1935 reports reached him at Heiligendamm that Julius had actually staged a demonstration outside a Berlin cinema showing an antisemitic film. In consequence, Jews had been manhandled in Kurfürstendamm—the foreign press spoke loosely of a pogrom.⁷⁶ He had long wanted to replace the capital's police president, Admiral Magdon von Levetzow. Goebbels suggested that his friend Count von Helldorff replace him.

It was a further indication of the decline in his moral probity. By that time the allegations against Helldorff—even within the Nazi party—filled seven pages. His gambling debts ran into the hundreds of thousands; he was in arrears with his rent; he had borrowed heavily from Jews; smoked expensive cigars; he had bought a heavy Mercedes in which he swanned around the countryside with a Mrs. von B.; he had been turfed out of the feudal Union Club for dishonorable conduct.

The ugliest allegation concerned the death of the famous Jewish clairvoyant Erik Jan Hanussen (alias Steinschneider): Late in 1932 Hanussen, currying favor with the Nazis, like many Jews at that time, had offered to donate 150 new uniforms, boots, and cash to the Brownshirts, and had been seen at Hedemann Strasse early in 1933 handing over money to Helldorff. In February 1933 a Berlin gossip columnist reported that Helldorff had attended a Hanussen seance in full uniform along with Marx, Jewish general manager of the Scala strip-club, and the purported Grand Duchess Anastasia.⁷⁷ As the count dodged and weaved to evade bankruptcy action, an arrest warrant was issued but never acted on. In March 1933 he nonetheless became police chief of Potsdam. Frantic to cover the tracks of his earlier misdeeds, Helldorff told his then chief of staff Karl Ernst to have the Jew Hanussen liquidated.⁷⁸ The Jewish clairvoyant was arrested on March 24, 1933 and found soon afterwards in the back of the head. The papers relating to his donations vanished. After Ernst in turn was shot during the Röhm purge a year later police searched his house and found an envelope marked 'Count von Helldorff'.

scene

1935

behind a cupboard, containing receipts for the money paid over by Hanussen to F. U. I.⁸⁰

Early in 1935 Berlin's deputy S.A. commander discussed this scandal with Dr Goebbels. Goebbels ignored it and on July 18 persuaded Hitler to promote Helldorff to be the new police chief of Berlin. It was an unpopular choice. The very next day S.A. chief Lutze suspended Helldorff from the S.A. and took away his right to wear its uniform. Both Goebbels and Hitler continued to protect him however and a few months later all legal action against him was halted.⁸¹

What Helldorff had going for him was that, like Streicher, he was a vicious antisemite. Summoning him to Heiligendamm, Goebbels swore that between them they would 'clean up' the capital. It was time, he announced two weeks later, to tell the Jews 'thus far and no further.' In recent months eighteen thousand more Jews had actually poured into Berlin. Speaking in Essen on August 4, he announced threateningly that the Germans had put up with provocations from their Jewish 'guests' for two years. The émigrés abroad retaliated with fresh horror stories about persecution. The *Manchester Guardian* published a wholly untrue story about East Prussian mills denying flour to Jewish bakers, and about food stores and pharmacists refusing to serve Jews. A Warsaw-based United Jewish Committee against Anti-Jewish Persecution in Germany appealed for world action.⁸²

Goebbels plotted his revenge. In his calculus, the Jews and bolsheviks went hand in hand. That August he read with fascination the typescript memoirs which Ernst Torgler had written in concentration camp.⁸³ The revelations came at an opportune time, because Goebbels had persuaded Hitler to give the upcoming seventh Nuremberg rally a pronounced anti-communist favor. Goebbels' great Nuremberg speech, later published as 'Communism with the Mask Off,' was a chilling indictment of the methods of the Moscow Jews, which did not stop short, he again alleged, of deliberate starvation and mass murder. He stated that the Hungarian communist exile Béla Kun (whom he 'unmasked' as Aaron Cohn) had ordered sixty thousand men machine-gunned in the Crimea in one year in the Twenties. Among the 1.8 million liquidated by the bolsheviks in the first five years of their reign had been teachers, doctors, officers, and policemen, and also 815,000 peasants. Who was behind this genocide? The answer, shrilled Goebbels, was the Jews. 'Cooperation with bolshevism,' he concluded, 'is possible neither on a political nor on a philosophical basis.'⁸⁴

FOR the next nine years Goebbels was the motor, goading his reluctant Führer into ever more radical actions against the Jews.⁸⁵ He sharpened the anti-Jewish provisions of the Reich chamber of culture.⁸⁶ Meeting in special session at Nuremberg the Reichstag that September 1936 passed a set of laws circumscribing the rights of Jews and half-Jews in Germany. Goebbels took no part in their drafting, but he welcomed these Nuremberg laws.⁸⁷ Subsequently he demanded a more rigorous interpretation

1935-36

208 III: THE REICH MINISTER

of them. In April 1936 he would exclude from the chamber of cult even quarter-Jews and those people married to a half-Jew. Eugenie Nijlajeva had one Jewish parent; as a favor, Goebbels secured for Hitler's permission to perform. Marianne Hoppe had a Jewish fiancé. She promised to dump him. His struggle to aryanize the chamber would continue for four more years.⁸⁸

Sept 17
economics

To Goebbels' ill-concealed irritation, Hitler leaned toward leniency applying these new laws. On September 17 he heard the Führer tell the gauleiters that 'above all' there must be no excesses against the Jew. A week later he heard Hitler reiterate this point to the gauleiters in Munich's city hall. 'No [persecution?] of "non-Aryans,"' Goebbels scribbled afterward—the word is illegible but the sense is clear—and described Hitler's speech as one long repudiation of Rosenberg and Streicher (both of whom nevertheless loudly applauded).⁸⁹ He tried to talk Hitler out one Sunday at the end of September. 'Jewish problem still not resolved even now,' he recorded. 'We debated it for a long time but the Führer still can't make his mind up.'⁹¹

Sometimes moderate attitudes did surface in Goebbels too. Curious he had argued against overdoing the restrictions on marriages when congenital deformities were involved.⁹² When over-zealous Nazis erased Jewish names from war memorials his diary displayed real irritation. But such insights were rare.

The murder of Wilhelm Gustloff, the party's representative in Switzerland, by a Jewish medical student in February 1936 at Davos brought to Goebbels' attention a shadowy, well-funded World League against Racism and Antisemitism (LICA) dedicated to attacking Hitler's Germany. After scanning Emil Ludwig's gloating book on the case Goebbels remarked in his diary: 'It would convert anybody who wasn't one already into an antisemite.' More ominously he added, 'This Jewish plague must be eradicated [ausgeradiert]. Totally. Nothing must be left.'⁹⁴ In LICA he momentarily found a worthy enemy. He staged a great funeral ceremony in Schwerin, Gustloff's home town, and when Switzerland put assassin David Frankfurter on trial he pulled whatever strings he could from Berlin; LICA contributed its vice-president Dr Léon Castro as assassin's lawyer and portrayed the self-confessed murderer as a martyr. Frankfurter stated that he had hoped that Hitler would die of the throat cancer falsely reported in the press, and when this happy event failed to occur he had intended to bump off Göring or Goebbels; denied opportunity, he had shot Gustloff instead. The court handed down an eighteen-year sentence. 'Now we have to unmask the camarilla behind him,' wrote Goebbels.⁹⁶

Uncomfortably conscious that LICA might have put out a contract on his life too, he warmed toward Julius Streicher again. He decided in indulgent diary entry that the gauleiter always would be an *enfant terrible*. 'I have been told that the Jews are getting uppity again,' he intoned on his tenth anniversary as Berlin's gauleiter. 'In the past I overestimated their intelligence. They are neither intelligent nor clever. If they'

1935-36

WHILE CROWDS EXULT BELOW 209

intelligent they would either disappear or play possum.' The excessively gentle voice in which he pronounced these lines, which were later omitted from the official text, struck his British listeners as being 'the very refinement of cruelty.'⁹⁸

How much more exhilarating it was to mastermind this ancient feud with the Jews than to pursue his humdrum ministerial routine—the receptions for gaggles of giggling maidens in regional costumes, the speeches to international penal experts,⁹⁹ the lectures to Wehrmacht officers.¹⁰⁰

HITLER freely discussed his strategic intentions and timetable with Goebbels. Debating the political situation with Goebbels, Göring, and Ribbentrop on May 14, 1935, two days after Marshal Pilsudski died, taking with him the hopes of a fruitful alliance with Poland, Hitler had predicted that the years 1936 and 1937 would hold particular dangers for Germany. 'Rearm, rearm!' wrote Goebbels afterwards.¹⁰¹ Mussolini, running into snags in Abyssinia, was warming toward the Nazis again.¹⁰² Even when unable to speak after a throat operation, Hitler still sent for Goebbels and told him of his worries, writing them down on paper for him.¹⁰³ Vacationing in August 1935 with Goebbels at Tegernsee the Führer repeated that his foreign policy was based on an alliance with Britain and an entente cordiale with Poland. 'Meanwhile, expansion in the east,' recorded Goebbels afterward. 'The Baltic states belong to us.' Peering into the future Hitler envisaged Britain fighting Italy over her invasion of Abyssinia and, a few years later, Japan fighting Russia. 'Then our great historic hour will come,' wrote Goebbels, deeply affected. 'We must be ready then. A grandiose prospect.'¹⁰⁴ He foresaw complications for Hitler over his support for Mussolini since this would be treading on Britain's toes; he briefed his editors accordingly, and Hitler also addressed his ministers and generals on the danger that Britain might include Germany in any sanctions against Italy.¹⁰⁵ 'All of this,' Goebbels realized, 'is coming three years too soon for us.'

Although the Nazis' rearmament program was far from complete, Hitler decided early in 1936 to risk a new coup. In violation of the Locarno pact, Paris was negotiating a treaty with Moscow which Hitler deemed to justify him in moving troops back into Germany's Rhineland provinces, demilitarized since the Versailles treaty. For a while however he bided his time. 'We are trying to overcome our difficulties,' declared Goebbels, speaking in Berlin on January 17, 1936, 'with the cunning of the serpent.' He added in a pointed reference that was withheld from most of the German press, 'If a treaty has become intolerable there are higher laws than those which are written in ink.'¹⁰⁶ Three days later Hitler notified him in strict confidence that he was contemplating reoccupying the Rhineland suddenly, as soon as Italy's war in Abyssinia ended.¹⁰⁷

Goebbels could scarcely keep the secret. In the Rhineland he spoke threateningly of both the League of Nations and the Jews, and advised Americans to tackle their own 'gangster problems' before meddling in

May
1935

Aug

Jan 1

Goebbels
speech

March 1. 1193f

210 III: THE REICH MINISTER

Germany's affairs. If Germany had had just two more army corps in Belgium in the war, he declared, in an extraordinary and again unrepentant passage, Germany would have won. 'That was a serious blunder added. 'It won't happen the next time.'¹⁰⁸

Febr. 27

A month passed. On February 27, lunching with Goebbels and Götz Hitler felt it was still premature to go into the Rhineland. But on the next day the French confirmed their treaty with Moscow. As he was in each of the next three years' crises, Dr Goebbels initially counseled Hitler against over-hasty action. Still grappling with the decision, the Führer phoned to invite him to join his private train that night; argued for hours, and by Munich Goebbels was still urging caution.

March 1.

Hitler however had made up his mind. On Sunday March 1, with Goebbels, his expression was calm but determined. Hitler explained his own credo: 'To the bold belongs the world!' Back in his chancellery in Berlin that Monday Hitler unveiled the plan to his commanders-in-chief. On Saturday (because, wrote Goebbels, Saturdays were best) he would proclaim that Germany was reoccupying the Rhineland, but simultaneously he would offer to return to the League of Nations and to a non-aggression pact with France. He was taking a calculated risk. France still had the biggest army in Europe. Britain, France, and the United States would all be justified in intervening.

'Nothing ventured, nothing gained,' was Goebbels' attitude, all his forces were thrown to the winds.¹¹⁰ After lunching with Hitler that Thursday he mockingly referred to the throngs of 'knicker-wetters' in the foreign ministry.¹¹¹ In fact the Cabinet, belatedly briefed on Friday, the eve of the operation, loyally backed Hitler. Goebbels sent two planeloads of puzzled journalists into the Rhineland ahead of the marching troops. After Hitler announced his move to cheering Reichstag deputies the following Saturday morning, Goebbels could hear the crowds 'exulting' below. 'The theme that would soon become a commonplace in his chronicle. 'The taps show the world of diplomacy all at sea,' he recorded, adding, 'the Rhineland a sea of joy.'¹¹²

It was perhaps the one moment in history when Hitler could have stopped. His own generals had panicked, but Goebbels urged him to hang tough. 'If we keep our nerve now,' he wrote afterward, 'we will win.'¹¹³

Mar 17, '36

* Dr. T. I was back in his good office again. Got into a tranquilization when humans become powerful on earth, so their power relations with angels and demons alter.

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angels
Devil
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March 29, 1936

25: A Man of Property

HITLER had called an election to endorse his action in the Rhineland. The climax was vintage Goebbels. He ordained that fifteen minutes before Hitler broadcast from Krupps' munitions works in Essen, a fitting stage, on March 27, every radio station would transmit the command to Hoist Flags on every building and homestead in Germany, to flutter until the election was over. As Hitler himself stepped to the microphone at four P.M., the Krupps' sirens were to hail 'the beginning of the Führer's great appeal for peace,' joined by the klaxons of every factory, locomotive, barge, and ship. While these sirens sang all traffic was to halt, demonstrating that the entire nation stood behind the Führer and his 'policy of peace.' The election's eve, Saturday March 28, was to see immense demonstrations throughout the country. Ten minutes before eight P.M. the great bells of Cologne's Gothic cathedral would toll, splendidly amplified by radios throughout the country, their clangor fading only as Hitler himself began to speak. After that, decreed Goebbels, the entire nation in unison, sixty-seven million voices, would sing the ancient Netherlands Prayer of Thanksgiving (to which he was particularly attached). Then would come the crucial Goebbels masterstroke—the deft touch which set him apart from all his imitators: Every radio station would fall *silent* for fifteen minutes, marking a reverent end to this, his 1936 campaign.¹

Thus it came to pass. Two weeks earlier he had written, 'This election just can't go wrong.'² (It would have been a miracle if it had, as the ballot papers bore only the names of Hitler and, in suitably smaller print, of Göring, Hess, Goebbels, and Frick; there was no provision whatever for voters to express dissent.)³ On Sunday March 29 98.6 percent of the voting population streamed into the polling booths, and 98.7 percent of those voted for Hitler—44,399,000 adult Germans.

March

4,000 Southerners.

A CONCRETE gesture of Hitler's gratitude followed.

For some months Goebbels, now a best-selling author, had been wondering if he could afford to buy the summer cottage at Cladow.⁴ On one visit to Obersalzberg he had told Max Winkler, his business adviser, that he wanted to provide for his family and was thinking of buying a farm. Winkler advised against it—the minister would only lose money on the land. Besides, what funds had he in mind? Goebbels mentioned this idea to Hitler, who promised to have a word with Goebbels' publisher

1936

212 III: THE REICH MINISTER

Max Amann;⁵ the minister now raised his sights and inspected a most luxurious redbrick property on Schwanenwerder, a millionaire's peninsula jutting into the Wannsee lake.⁶ The villa and its gate lodge in In Strasse stood on a gentle wooded incline verging on the bull-rush-fringed lakeshore. The property had, it seems, formerly belonged to one of the Barmat brothers, the Jewish embezzlers who had fled to Holland even before Hitler came to power.⁷ It was now in the name of the Jewish bank director Oskar Schlitter.⁸ Almost ten years earlier, Dr Goebbels's *Angriff* had repeatedly inveighed against 'Schweinenwerder' (Isle of Pigs) as a 'Jew-boys' paradise.⁹ Now he was going to 'out-Jew' them all.

At the climax of the Rhineland election campaign Karl Hanke brought the necessary papers over to Goebbels at Godesberg.¹⁰ Hitler who heartedly approved of the purchase. He believed in assisting his subordinates to become men of property.¹¹ The final purchase price was 270,000 marks. The Führer personally phoned Goebbels from Munich guaranteeing that the money would be forthcoming—'Amann has turned up trumps again,' Goebbels wrote. He moved his family into the Schwanenwerder property just before Easter 1936, and invited his favorite younger sister Maria to stay with them.¹²

How did he eventually finance the deal? Goebbels asked Winkler to discuss the capital value of his private diaries with Amann. Amann accompanied him back to Berlin one day in October and they agreed terms. Goebbels had in mind an outright payment of three million marks for the diaries, but Amann came up with a different proposal: Goebbels should sell all rights to him, for publication twenty years after his death—'250,000 marks immediately and 100,000 marks per annum. This Goebbels recorded in a massive understatement, 'is most generous.' This was undoubtedly the origin of the cash he handed over in November to complete the Schwanenwerder deal: surviving among Goebbels's papers in 1945 a sheet of paper would be found listing his account with Amann's publishing house, showing that during 1936 they paid him advances totaling 290,000 marks against earnings of a much lower figure, 63,416.31 marks.¹⁴

MEANWHILE Magda has furnished the guest lodge for her idol, Adolf Hitler. In later years he will often show up unannounced, bring perhaps Jakob Werlin, general manager of Daimler-Benz, to sample crème caramel. His adjutant tips the Goebbels' servants and, later, 'surrender to her the food-ration coupons for Hitler's share of the meal.'

For most of 1936 Magda Goebbels alternates between a sulky obstinacy and uxorial bliss. She grouches that she never has enough housekeeping money but the ministry's records show that two days before they moved in to Schwanenwerder Goebbels has ordered his ministerial and parliamentary salaries paid directly into her bank account.¹⁶

She resigns herself to his (perhaps imagined) infidelities.¹⁷ Vacation with her in Switzerland, Mussolini's daughter Edda Ciano philosophizes that an unfaithful spouse is but a trivial annoyance in one's mortal struggle

Scrub

1935

Magda begins to go out more alone. One day Goebbels records moodily that the moment Magda returns home he leaves for Schwanenwerder—'I have no place I can call home when she's there.'¹⁸ Oppressed by the chains of marriage, he lies out late on the darkening meadow gazing at the stars.¹⁹ He indulges in a large motor launch, and spends many an afternoon lolling about the lake, chatting on its mobile phone to his friends; he buys another boat for Magda and the children.²⁰ Hanfstaengl describes one ghastly incident at a Goebbels party: As the last guests leave, the crippled minister trips and falls; Magda helps him to his feet. Purple with rage, he seizes her by the throat and forces her sideways to her knees. 'There,' he screams, 'now you see who is the stronger, who is the master!'²¹ After one tiff she resorts to tears. 'Sometimes she gets into a state,' he writes helplessly, 'like all women. Then you've just got to bare your teeth at her.'²²

See
He feels
he
set up
this fall.

His own circle expands. She becomes accustomed to all the other lovelies fluttering around her powerful husband.²³ There is a stream of delectable wannabee-actresses. 'I'll try,' notes Goebbels succinctly after Eva Vanya visits, seeking a role.²⁴ Anny Ondra, the blonde, cheerful, and naïve wife of boxer Max Schmeling, comes to Schwanenwerder; Goebbels finds Edda Ciano, who also comes, 'frightfully painted, like just about every other Italian woman.'²⁵ At the Italian embassy's reception for Edda, Bella Fromm notices that Goebbels ventures only the curtest nod in Leni Riefenstahl's direction.²⁶

It is the children who hold the Goebbels marriage together in the mid-Thirties. Helga, the apple of Hitler's eye too now, sits on her papa's lap singing lustily as they return from the seaside near Peenemünde that July.²⁷ 'Grandma is *old*,' she declares solemnly that summer. 'But Papa is—*new*!'²⁸ As the three children splash around in a new rubber dinghy, his heart aches with parental love.²⁹ He persuades the Cabinet to approve the death-penalty for child kidnappers. Hitler will say that if little Helga were twenty years older, and he twenty years younger, she would have made the ideal wife for him. An enchanting, precocious, graceful girl she will captive everybody with remarks that are as genuine as Hitler's are contrived. 'My little heart is thumping,' she squawks in one moment of girlish panic, and her doting father remembers the words in his diary.³⁰

AMONG the cavalcades of English ladies passing through Berlin that summer of 1936 is Diana Mitford. Staying with her sister Unity at Schwanenwerder for the Olympic Games, she conveys to Goebbels a plea for secret funds from Sir Oswald Mosley, an upstanding and forceful former minister who has resigned from the British Labour party to set up his own radical movement along fascist lines. (When Mosley had visited Hitler on April 25, 1935, Goebbels noted in his unpublished diary: 'He makes a good impression. A bit brash, which he tries to conceal behind a forced pushiness. Otherwise acceptable however. Of course he's on his best behavior. The Führer has set to work on him. Wonder if he'll ever come to power?')³¹ By 1936 Mosley is already receiving substantial

1936

June 19,

1936

Aug

secret aid from Mussolini, and now he is boldly asking Hitler for infusion of one hundred thousand pounds (around half a million dollars).³² Taking Diana and her sister Unity to see Hitler on June 1936 Dr Goebbels procures (his diary claims) £10,000 for Mosley—less than the asking amount, but still a very substantial contribution to Germany's currency shortages.³³ Goebbels is dubious about Mosley, nominates Franz Wrede, of the party's press office, to smuggle the money over to London.³⁴ 'Mosley must work harder,' summarizes Goebbels after Wrede reports back to him, 'and be less mercenary.'³⁵ When Dr Goebbels returns in August, asking for more, he fobs her off (with Hitler's approval). 'They must learn to help themselves,' he comments, recollecting his penniless start in Berlin.³⁶

As her private sorrows increase, Magda drinks more heavily, sometimes her eye wanders. It is Rosenberg, of all people, who tips Goebbels about a certain Lüdecke in her life.³⁷ At first she cries a lot, denies it when he asks her, leaving him agonizing over whether she is lying. On the first night in August, the day the Berlin Olympiad opens, she admits that she has strayed. 'A great blow to my trust,' he writes downcast. 'It'll take me a while to get over it.'³⁸ He spends sleepless nights brooding, and evidently mentions it to Hitler. 'He praises Magda a lot,' he writes after that. 'Finds her bewitching, "the best wife I could ever find."' 'When I speak alone with him,' records the young minister the next day, 'he talks to me like a father.'³⁹

Not for the last time, Magda leaves for the White Hart sanatorium in Dresden, playground of the wealthy, leaving her children at Marienwerder for the summer. Goebbels barely misses her. He has his hands full with planning the Nuremberg rally; Hitler has flatly rejected his half-hearted suggestion that they skip the rally this year because of the Olympics.⁴⁰

THE Olympic games of 1936 were a sporting and propaganda triumph for Germany. Tourists flooded in.⁴¹ Confounding foreign expectations, Hitler ruled that all competitors be treated with equal respect regardless of race or religion. Goebbels ordered the party to keep a low profile. Leni Riefenstahl's crews filmed the events, awash with a 1.2 million-reichsmark loan from the ministry. Goebbels found her increasingly tiresome. 'I had to knock some sense into Leni Riefenstahl,' he wrote. 'Her behavior is unspeakable! A hysterical woman! Anyway, no man.'⁴² Their spat was to continue until Hitler lost patience, banged their heads together, ordered Goebbels to accompany him to Riefenstahl's villa in Dahlem, and had a joint photograph printed in every newspaper the next day.⁴⁴

At the end of the games Goebbels staged the most sumptuous all-party affair of his life. Benno von Arnt's stage designers and craftsmen labored for weeks to convert Peacock Island, an unspoiled wilderness near Potsdam, into a fairy grotto; thousands of butterfly-shaped lamps graced the trees, and there were three outdoor dance floors, brightly colored marquees, and tables for thousands of guests—among them Go

Fröhlich and his eye-catching filmstar fiancée Lida Baarova, upon whom Goebbels heaped particular compliments this night; he had again noticed her talents in her latest film a few weeks earlier.⁴⁵ 'Everybody with legs was there,' recorded the little Doctor proudly afterwards, knowing he had outdone Goring at last. He sashayed around in an elegant white suit; Magda, never one to miss a party, had returned from Dresden, and glided at his side in a bright organdy outfit. 'Where the government gets the money from to entertain thus lavishly,' wrote Louis Lochner in a letter home, 'I don't know.'⁴⁶

The good times rolled for Dr Goebbels all that summer. He had the new launch, and a new Mercedes 5.4 liter two-seats sports car.⁴⁷ He had ordered yet another limousine, an open Horch tourer just like the Führer's.⁴⁸ He test-cruised an even classier motor boat.⁴⁹ And yet, in the more distant valleys of his mind, it was as if he could already hear a bell tolling—more persistent, more penetrating than the great peal of Cologne. He sat brooding at his desk, drafting his speech for the Nuremberg rally, reading up on the communist reign of terror in Republican Spain. The Reds there had slain priests and nuns, and butchered seven thousand of their enemies in Madrid alone. Might not the same one day come to pass in Berlin?

'Woe betide us in that event,' he wrote thoughtfully in his diary. 'We and our families would all be done for. The best thing then would be to finish yourself off first.'⁵⁰

Aug 18, 1936

26: Femme Fatale

LIVE wild, live fine!' writes Goebbels in September 1936, opening a new diary.¹ He has just embarked upon the most destructive emotional entanglement of his life. He has seen Lida Baarov in her new film in June, and again at the Peacock Island fête in August, it may be no coincidence that his new villa on Schwanenwerder is on stone's throw from Gustav Fröhlich's twelve-roomed mansion, set at tennis courts and boathouses by the lake. With Magda a fugitive from marriage in her Dresden sanitarium and again broodily pregnant 'Lüdecke' perhaps the father?²—the young minister soon tires of his private secretary Lucie Kammer. He often glances at his glamorous neighbors. When Lida returns one afternoon from the August Olympic she finds him casually strolling down Insel Strasse with Helga and Hilse. He asks if he may have a look over the Fröhlich mansion. Her lover Goebbels innocently obliges, while the little girls and Lida play with Fröhlich's lavish train set.³

Aug 18 On August 18, three days after Peacock Island, he invites the young couple out in his launch.⁴ Years later Lida will give her own shy account of this picnic cruise. The pretty actress sisters Höpfner, whom Goebbels is also cultivating, have joined them. It is a broiling-hot day, they swim, cruise, and sip tea until her Gustl apologizes that he has an all-night shoot at the studios and can one of the police escort-launches take them ashore?

'I always go everywhere with him,' explains Lida. The words stridently chord in Goebbels—Magda shares none of his interests. He insists jovially that Lida stay. Gustl, visibly annoyed, leaves without her. As the moon rises, reflected in the still waters of the Wannsee, Goebbels lingers over and stands behind Lida at the railing. 'How do you like it here in Germany?' he asks. His melodious, rich voice seems to caress her, as he will later say. The bond is forged at this moment.

His rival, Gustav Fröhlich, meanwhile makes a classic mistake: A visiting his estranged spouse, a Jewess who has emigrated to London, accidentally calls Lida by the wife's name at a tender moment. He flounders back to her own humble lodgings off Kurfürstendamm.

For a while that August Goebbels lets things drift. He takes Magda to Venice. But it is the actress Lilian Harvey with whom he punts along the canals while pregnant Magda stays in the hotel.⁵ The hunt is on—he cannot get Lida out of his mind. She is a head and shoulders taller than

Sept 8, 1936

he is, but she has an arresting Slavonic beauty. Her fresh young face has both childish innocence and womanly guile. Early in September he ascertains that she is resting with her mother at Franzensbad, a spa near Nuremberg. Suddenly he begins looking forward to this year's Nuremberg rally after all. His diary records 'diverse phone calls' on the fifth about the premiere of *Traitors*, her latest film with Fröhlich—Goebbels is arranging to switch it to Nuremberg; phoning Magda from Nuremberg he pleads with her to stay away at Dresden or Schwanenwerder. Then phoning Lida he invites her over to Nuremberg, reassuring her that fellow actors Irene von Meyendorff and Willy Birgel will be coming too—'You can't miss out on this!' he says.

His rally speech on September 8 is one of his finest. Towering above the thousands on a lofty pulpit, he forcefully describes the murderous rampage of the bolsheviks in Spain, and the 'pathological and criminal madness' of their Jewish masters in Moscow.⁶

Lida arrives the next day, Saturday September 9. At the Grand Hotel banquet after the premiere he fusses over her, he flirts, and then commands her to accompany him over to Hitler's hotel. Here a female singer softly croons Nico Dostal's latest hit, 'I am so much in love...', and Lida is flustered to hear Dr Goebbels murmur in her ear, '... me too!'⁷ He has done this so often before, it is second nature to him now. As the party breaks up she plants a harmless kiss on his cheek; he removes the smudge with a pocket handkerchief, solemnly tucks it into his top pocket, and pleads with her to stay over and lunch with him the next day, Sunday. Here he inquires casually if she is still unmarried, and catching an aggrieved undertone in her reply about her lover's reluctance to remarry, he diffidently asks: 'Would you turn me down if I asked to see you again?'

That Sunday afternoon he asks her to stay on, to hear his second great speech. 'Please look at me closely as I speak,' he says, and pulls out that handkerchief. 'I shall dab at my lips with this, as a sign that I am thinking of you.'

What twenty-two-year-old female (Lida's birthday has fallen just three days before) is not bowled over by such artful devices? Bedazzled, Lida again puts off returning to her mother at Franzensbad. Goebbels makes no mention whatever of her in his diary of these days. 'A miracle has happened,' is all he writes.⁸ After the speech, in a circumlocution that will become familiar to its readers, he carefully records 'a little drive to recuperate;' the next afternoon, Monday, 'some sleep;' and then, without mentioning *whose*, 'departure to Franzensbad.'⁹ He sends his adjutant to the railroad station to see Lida off with roses and a photograph inscribed, 'Auf Wiedersehen!' A few days later he certainly sees her again in Nuremberg. 'A visitor from Franzensbad,' he notes, 'about which I am much pleased.'¹⁰ This is the first time that he has passed significant, if camouflaged, comments on a prospective lover in his diary.

Lida Baarova will affect him more profoundly than any other woman since Anka. They will bring to each other great happiness: But the ensuing romance, which is almost entirely platonic, will sweep him to

Sep

1936

218 III: THE REICH MINISTER

the brink of divorce, self-exile, and even suicide. As for Lida, she nobly abstain from the general calumny of him after his death. Legions of obscure starlets will claim, without a shred of supporting evidence that he forced himself upon them. 'It would have left him no time at all for work,' Lida points out.

'Toward me,' she still insists, 'his behavior was impeccable.' It is courtesy and patience as a suitor that impress her. But does she ever truly love him? Even years later she cannot be sure. 'I loved him in my own way,' she will recollect. 'I was very young and you are very susceptible that age. . . . He loved me so deeply, that I fell in love with love itself.'

AT this Nuremberg rally Hitler announced a four-year plan for Germany. His grand ideas on foreign policy came as no surprise to Goebbels. After sitting in on one conference aboard Hitler's yacht *Grille* at Kiel in May 1936 he had noted down the Führer's prophetic vision of a United States of Europe under a German leadership. 'Years, perhaps even decades of work toward that end,' he commented in his diary. 'But we have an end!'¹³ Mussolini's victory in Abyssinia had seemingly confirmed an important lesson: that might was right. 'Anything else is nonsense,' concluded Goebbels.¹⁴ Clearly at Hitler's behest he was already gearing up for future hostilities. He established close relations with the Wehrmacht, and had quiet talks with Blomberg about beefing up transmission powers and mobilizing war reporters.¹⁵ 'The Führer,' he added at another secret meeting with Hitler, Papen, and Ribbentrop, 'sees conflict coming in the Far East. Japan will thrash Russia. And then our great hour will come. Then we shall have to carve off enough territory to last us a hundred years. Let's hope that we're ready, and that the Führer is still alive.'¹⁶ Anticipating that moment, late in November 1936 Hitler signed a deal with the Japanese. Over dinner with the signatories, Hitler prophetically remarked that it would not bear fruit for another five years. 'He really is taking the long view in foreign policy,' marveled the propaganda minister.¹⁷

While relations with Göring were strained but stable, a never-ending feud with Alfred Rosenberg had broken out, fueled by Goebbels' contrived plans for a 105-member cultural senate and a seventh chamber of the Reich chamber of culture. Suffice to say that Rosenberg still claimed culture as his own domain.¹⁸ Toward Hess as deputy Führer Goebbels preserved a bemused if antiseptic cordiality; in truth he found Hess bourgeois and probably unbalanced. Hess's businesslike chief of staff Martin Bormann suggested that he had neither imagination nor initiative—and would be proven wrong on both counts five years later. Goebbels had already spotted that it could be dangerous to have Bormann himself as an enemy.²⁰ Goebbels' early admiration for Ribbentrop waned during 1935 and expired entirely after he was appointed ambassador in London in August 1936. He then took every opportunity he could to score off him. When agency photos arrived showing Ribbentrop's seventeen-year-old son leaving their Eaton Square house in his West-

Nov

Aug

1936

ster school uniform of top hat and tails, Goebbels cruelly ensured that they were printed in every Berlin newspaper that Hitler read.²¹ Mercy was not a quality in which he excelled.

IT IS mid-September 1936 before Magda returns from Dresden to Berlin. She works off her rancor on her little husband. 'Magda's changing,' he notes self-righteously. 'It's sickening!'²² Seeking affection he turns to Lida Baarova, temporarily ensconced in the Hotel Eden with Fröhlich, to whom she has returned; their respective villas on Schwanenwerder are mothballed for the winter. He obtains an advance print of Fröhlich's latest movie, *City of Anatolia*, and offers to show it to them. The actor swallows the bait and his pride, and brings Lida along. Afterward Goebbels notes that Fröhlich's acting is not all that good; but it is with Fröhlich that Lida nonetheless leaves, bound for Franzensbad.²³

A grander campaign plan is called for. With some prodding the City of Berlin agrees to give Goebbels for his lifetime a domain in one of its forests on his forthcoming birthday. He has inspected it with Karl Hanke in mid-September; it is near the forest village of Lanke, about twenty miles north-east of the capital. Hanke has selected an idyllic location on a little swan lake, the Bogensee, enveloped by groves of fir, beech, and pine. 'All around, the deepest solitude,' describes Goebbels. 'Hanke has done his stuff well.' With manpower provided by the labour service, a two-story woodframed house is rapidly erected on an incline at the water's edge. A tall wire fence will be thrown up around the entire lake to preserve the minister's privacy.²⁴ (House and fence are still there. The author, visiting it nearly sixty years later, found one rusting hook in a nearby mildewed tree where once a children's swing had hung.)

Later that month he flies to Greece with Magda, taking in the Acropolis ('this noble temple of Nordic art') and Parthenon; he meets prime minister Johannis Metaxas, who professes to like the Germans as much as he loathes the Jews and bolsheviks. Then he returns to Berlin and continues furnishing his love-nest at Lanke, including among its accouterments a special diary—kept just during his visits out here.²⁵

He fantasizes about being out here alone with Lida Baarova. He phones her in Prague, where she is visiting her mother, to ask when she will be back. 'Quite soon,' she replies guilelessly. 'Gustl's staying on at Karlsbad.'

He escorts her out frequently in the evenings. On October 5 his diary coyly records 'a little *Spazierfahrt*,' a motor outing before he returns late to bed.²⁶ Appeasing Magda he buys her a costly ring on Hellmut's first birthday. His diary sparkles with occasional flattery of Magda, but it has a dutiful quality.²⁷ Visiting the gracious spa resort of Baden-Baden (without Magda) in October he is evidently not alone, as witness the unexplained phrases that slip into its pages, like those on the twelfth, when the night ends with 'a big disappointment,' followed by the disembodied remark: 'Did not come down from room any more.' Followed by: 'I am so sad.'²⁸ At Berlin upon his return he finds Magda livid: 'About nothing—nothing at all.' Undaunted he goes out motoring again that afternoon,

Oct

1936

220 III: THE REICH MINISTER

and stops at their (deserted) Schwanenwerder villa on the way back would be charitable to assume that he was alone, were it not self-evident that his diary has now become the vehicle for half-truths.

On the day before the new house at Lanke is formally handed over him Magda takes the dour but handsome Hanke out to see it. Goebbels seizes the opportunity to visit Schwanenwerder again, where Lida Baarova is house-sitting the dust-sheeted Fröhlich villa three lots from his own.²⁹ He phones to invite himself round for tea. Lida points out how improper that would seem; covered with embarrassment, the minister suggests they motor out one day to see Lanke instead.³⁰ 'You know I have a little house out there now,' he says. 'We can have tea there. It's very pretty.' She helplessly falls in with his suggestion that one day she should motor out along the new autobahn in her little black and white BMW to the Lanke exit, where his chauffeur Alfred Rach will be waiting to meet her with his new open Horch tourer.³¹ 'All Berlin used to speak about his love affairs,' Rach will later reminisce, adding a revealing remark: 'I found that very flattering.'³²

Nov

On his birthday at the end of October he drives out to Lanke. It is idyllic, romantic and tranquil. After that he takes Magda out there on the first day of November. Alone together in the middle of this autumn forest of yellowing leaves, fog, and rain, they spend a quiet day hanging pictures, playing the piano, and singing Schubert's lieder.³³ The next day a heavy Horch limousine returns, splashing through the fresh puddles 'all alone,' he writes, an untruth which his own diary exposes a few lines later. (He writes, 'We cook ourselves something.') This is the occasion that Lida will later describe, when his manservant Kaiser burns the only provisions, fried potatoes. Of such tiny episodes romantic memories are made. On November 5 the diary finds him out at Lanke once more 'taking refuge' from 'unpleasantness' at home. 'She is so fickle,' he says on Magda's birthday. 'Sometimes good and sometimes horrid. But that is probably just how women are.'³⁴

He has less than nine years left of his allotted span, but he has assembled all the baggage that go with middle life: A beautiful young mistress; dissatisfied, nagging wife; and three angelic infants who thump around on the bare floor above him far into the night. 'It is music to my ears,' writes Dr Goebbels, still aged only thirty-nine.³⁵

Sept 1936

ONE evening in September 1936 Magda brought Diana Mitford to dinner at Schwanenwerder. Hearing that Sir Oswald Mosley, leader of the British Union of Fascists, was planning to marry Diana in secret, Magda suggested they do it in Berlin. Goebbels didn't like the idea and ruminating about it in his diary: Magda was getting too involved, he felt. Hitler and Goebbels agreed that Mosley was not a great man; but Hitler coughed up funds for Diana, according to the diary, when she visited Berlin at the time of the Edward VIII crisis.³⁷

The secret wedding went ahead in Magda's drawing room at Neuen Hermann-Göring Strasse; Magda invited the guests, who included Hitler

1936 → 193

out to Schwanenwerder for lunch. The new Lady Mosley gave Goebbels an inside account of the royal scandal. The new king wanted to marry an American woman, already once divorced and still married to another, she said. Goebbels professed dismay at the depths a proud empire could sink to; but this was the king who, as Prince of Wales, had openly praised Hitler's social program and they all—Hitler, Goebbels, and Ribbentrop—agreed to do the decent thing now. As the American and Continental press broke into a raucous hue-and-cry Dr Goebbels, with Hitler's approval, forbade the German media to print one whisper on the scandal. After King Edward abdicated the Nazi wiretappers heard one British embassy official commenting that the new Duke of Windsor would not easily forget Hitler's restraint.³⁸

Their discretion was poorly rewarded. During 1937 and 1938 the anti-Nazi jibes from some elements of the British press multiplied. Ribbentrop told Goebbels that much of it was controlled by the Jews, as were Britain's cinema chains.³⁹ He suggested they purchase cinemas in London. Goebbels listened sympathetically. His ministry was awash with money, and he did use some secret funds to buy up foreign newspapers as well.⁴⁰ Like Hitler he regarded Britain as holding the key to Germany's future. But how to proceed? Mosley was 'spending a fortune and getting nowhere,' he concluded; he had won no seats at all in the municipal elections. 'I think he's a busted flush,' wrote Goebbels after a further panhandling visitation by Lady Mosley in August 1937.⁴¹

HIS admiration of Hitler was now unconditional.⁴² The Führer confided in him regularly. In mid-July 1936 he and Magda had spent three days at the Berghof, Hitler's lavish new mountainside domain high above Berchtesgaden. 'We had a long parlover,' writes Goebbels. 'The three of us—the Führer, Göring, and I. That's always best.'⁴³ They had all shared the annual Wagner experience at Bayreuth that summer. In October 1936 Hitler had assigned to Goebbels an upstairs room at his own Berghof, a certain sign of his esteem for him.⁴⁴

Knowing Hitler's intentions, Goebbels took a closer interest in their growing armed forces. In early 1937 he spoke for two hours to selected Wehrmacht commanders about propaganda.⁴⁵ General von Blomberg attached significant weight to the wartime role of propaganda. In that autumn's maneuvers Goebbels' new propaganda units took part for the first time. There was one uncomfortable detail: Although Berlin went into full blackout, the 'enemy' planes still got through and Goebbels' ministry was adjudged a blazing ruin by the referees. 'Let's hope it's never for real,' he gasped in his diary.⁴⁶

THE Goebbels family spends a few days early in 1937 at Hitler's Berghof again. Before turning in one night, Goebbels speaks for some hours with Magda, now heavily pregnant, about love and marriage. He feels they are drawing closer again, as always 'when nobody comes between us.'⁴⁷ After a couple of days he leaves his family there and returns to Berlin.

193

Jan 23, 1937

222 III: THE REICH MINISTER

Predatory females cluster around him there.⁴⁸ He drives out some fine nights to the new house at Lanke, explaining to his diary 'nobody waiting for me in Berlin.'⁴⁹

Jan
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Magda and Hitler return to the capital together on the twenty-third. All this sets tongues wagging. Gossip queen Bella Fromm, still hold out in Berlin, records privately that Goebbels has been seen hang around some pretty low dives, and that Magda now has a list of more than thirty women he has slept with.⁵⁰ Magda's closeness to Hitler attracts satirical comment, and after Werner Count von Alvensleben lets slip an incautious remark about her, her children, and her Führer. Goebbels complains to Hitler and has the count, spluttering denial, whisked off to concentration camp.⁵¹ Shortly the police tell Goebbels that his cook Martha has been gossiping too, and she is sacked with notice. 'Let's hope she hasn't done any harm already,' he writes, withdrawing no details to his diary.

It is of relevance to examine his views on divorce and adultery at this time. Hitler takes a more liberal view of divorce than Goebbels.⁵² Goebbels instinctively opposes it, although he feels that most party wives 'too thick to hang on to their husbands.'⁵³ There are strains of Catholic puritanism in him. When his young sister, still in her twenties, begins dating a divorced film producer of forty-five, Max Kimmich, he and his detectives discreetly check the man's background. 'It's okay,' he writes after hearing their report. 'Maria can fall in love with him.'⁵⁴ Preferring double standards to single, he spends nights out at Lanke ('gossiping and lazing'), and days discussing the new laws with Hitler. He proposes couples be forced to wait a year after filing for divorce—this cooling-off period will save many faltering marriages.⁵⁵ But in his diary are many unconscious hints at his own activities. He criticizes theater director Eugen Klöpfer for his womanizing: 'The theater is not a free-for-all for girl-snatchers,' he huffs.⁵⁶ Even more hypocritically he lectures incorrigible Walter Grantzow for falling in love with 'some starlet,' now wanting to dump his wife.⁵⁷

His stand on adultery is no less self-serving. When the minister of interior Wilhelm Frick, a pettifogging lawyer whom Goebbels detests, proposes with almost Islamic fervor ten-year jail terms for adult adultery, Goebbels snorts: 'Then let them begin retroactively with Frick.' That night he drives scriptwriter Thea von Harbou (the lovely wife of Ernst Lang) home; and what right have we to doubt that she only 'tells me her new film plans'?⁵⁸ He tells Hitler that neither divorce nor adultery is any concern of the public prosecutor. Hitler promises that he will shut down Frick's draconian proposals on adultery. At the end of 1937, when adultery again comes before the Cabinet, Goebbels is still fighting. 'Finally,' he records, 'we agree: prison sentences only if demanded by the wronged husband and in the public interest.' The same Cabinet session decides that any rape committed by a Jew shall be a capital offense.⁵⁹ During these debates, the diaries glimpse Joseph Goebbels driving the two Höpfner sisters out to Lanke in the snow: 'I

Jan 30, 1937

FEMME FATALE 223

castigating a chastened actress, Marie-Louise Claudius, for indiscreet remarks: Then assisting the beautiful Brigitte Horney with her foreign-currency problems: Then receiving the no less shapely actress Gina Falckenberg for a script discussion session ('I can help her too').⁶⁰

After a difficult confinement Magda gives birth on February 19, two months prematurely. The gynecologist says that the sickly little newcomer, another girl, is truly *holde*, sweet; and they leave her with this name. 'Just what I wanted,' cries Helga, cradling her baby sister. 'It came down from the clouds!' Magda lies amid her pillows, tired and happy, and her large dreamy eyes fill with tears as her (cuckolded?) husband limps in.⁶¹

NONE of the Goebbels children would be baptized. Goebbels had declared open war on the church. When the devoutly catholic post-office minister, Eltz von Rübenach, turned down Hitler's gift of party membership, made to all the non-party ministers on January 30, 1937, explaining that he could not join a party that oppressed the church, it was Dr Goebbels who indignantly orchestrated his colleagues' demand for Eltz's resignation.⁶² Hitler however was one of the few Nazi leaders who still paid the ten percent church levy on their income, and he saw no point in stirring up a hornets' nest.⁶³ It was not that he admired the churches. He commented to Goebbels that they had imbued modern man with a fear of death that his ancestors had never known.⁶⁴ But he was a pragmatist. Twice in February 1937 he called conferences at the Berghof on the inter-confessional disputes, to which he invited Goebbels along with Frick, Hess, and Himmler. On the first occasion he explained that the Reich had to avoid needless discord, since he expected a full-scale world war within a few years.⁶⁵ At the second conference he again predicted 'a great world conflict' in five or six years' time. 'Germany,' he told his colleagues, 'will prevail in a coming battle, or no longer survive.' 'What a genius the Führer truly is,' he wrote, setting all this down for posterity.⁶⁶

Jan

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1937

27: The Round Table

HE was now in his fortieth year. The three years before war broke out would show him at his most innovative as minister. He laid the foundations of an imaginative welfare scheme for German elderly stars of stage and screen.¹ He put his ministry's top officials on blue-collar jobs for two months to gain experience in industry.² He created the hugely successful traveling exhibition of degenerate work of art confiscated from galleries and museums. Despite Hitler's strictures he initiated a pitiless campaign of legal repression against church officials and he maintained his very personal vendetta against the Jews. He bought up Germany's biggest film studios in a determined attempt to take over Hollywood. He consolidated his hold on the printed and broadcast word though he never truly controlled the newspapers. And all the time he fine-tuned the propaganda weapon for Hitler's coming wars of conquest.

His was the sharpest tongue in town. 'I've got three men,' Hitler would say, 'who just can't stop laughing when they're sitting down together.' He was referring to Hoffmann, Amann, and Goebbels. At the chancellery's round table the propaganda minister, whom he dubbed 'chief jester' of the Third Reich, usually sat directly opposite him.⁴ Goebbels had the nerve and wit to interrupt his monologues.⁵ Confident of his personal status, he was merciless toward the other guests. 'V Tiny,' he would greet Winifred Wagner's oafish daughter Friedelinde fat and dumb and lazy and gluttonous as ever.⁶ When the malodorous Otto Dietrich remarked that the best ideas always came to him in his bath-tub, Goebbels piped up: 'Then you must have good ideas ^{not} often, Dr Dietrich!' ⁷ Once, Viktoria von Dirksen, outraged by a Goebbels barb, appealed: 'Mein Führer, tell your minister to shut up!' (He lapsed into Viennese dialect, grinned, and directed Goebbels to change the subject.)⁸ Magda, the common object of their affections, winced at his cruel wit.⁹ After ordering the summary arrest of all astrologers, magnetopaths, and other occultists he would scoff: 'Remarkably enough not one of these clairvoyants foresaw that he was about to be arrested' ^{ugh}

Those of his victims who fought back lived to regret it. Once 'Pip Hanfstaengl' read out to the round table a Goebbels press announcement praising 'the eternal immortality of the German people.' 'Don't you worry about my style,' snapped Goebbels. 'With my style I have conquered Germany.' Hanfstaengl retorted that he had always thought the Führer's style had done that.¹¹ Hitler, put up to it by Goebbels, despatched

1937

Hanfstaengl on a fake 'parachute mission behind the lines to General Franco' in February 1937: Terrified for his life, Hanfstaengl absconded to London.¹²

It was here at this round table that Hitler and Goebbels plotted the special edition of a counterfeit *Völkischer Beobachter* in which their self-important radio chief Eugen Hadamowsky could learn that he had been awarded the Goethe Prize (he had not). They ushered him out onto the balcony to take the plaudits of the Wilhelm Strasse crowds; once out there, he found the street bare.¹³

The two Nazis had each other's measure. Goebbels joked once that President Roosevelt had written inviting him to become propaganda secretary in Washington. 'A tough choice, dear Doctor,' replied Hitler smoothly. 'Let me know how you decide.'¹⁴ Hitler would recall the election meeting at Stettin where Goebbels, replacing him at short notice, found the ticket price slashed from 60 to 25 pfennigs. 'Remember now,' he would chide Goebbels. 'You're not worth half as much as I.'¹⁵

Goebbels needed public adulation as a vampire feeds on blood.¹⁶ The British government decided in June 1937 that he was out of favor, and losing influence in the country.¹⁷ Like many small men he was sensitive to criticism, and swooned with rage at foreign caricatures that highlighted his physical deformity. He had a youth who called him a Jesuit catspaw sentenced to three months.¹⁸ The mayor of Halle earned low marks for recommending in an article that promotions depend on physique. Yet the women around Hitler adored him. Hitler's junior secretaries would rush to the windows whenever Goebbels walked by. 'If you only knew what eyes he has,' they enthused to a new colleague, 'and how captivatingly he laughs.'¹⁹ Hitler would also mention that laugh, telling Streicher after Goebbels had spent a week at the Berghof, 'Anybody who can laugh as loudly as this man, whom Nature has so cruelly afflicted, cannot be all bad.'²⁰ Streicher told him that Hitler had said he could not get along without Goebbels.²¹ The other top Nazis were less easily captivated. Darré wrote of the minister as a 'mongrel apeman.'²² At one training course at Vogelsang, the Nazi staff college, the eight hundred district leaders (Kreisleiter) greeted both Goebbels' appearance and his speech with total silence. One participant saw beads of perspiration trickle down his face before he furiously stalked off the stage.²³

His own self-image was of a family man and Hitler's most universally popular minister.²⁴ Once that summer he decided that in future he would walk to the ministry. Two adjutants fetched him from the villa in Hermann-Göring Strasse the next morning. None of the thousands of passers-by took any notice, and he never did it again. He preferred staged photo-opportunities, like the annual first day of the Winter Relief collection, when he would face the photographers with his wife and children, all holding collecting boxes. 'What good fortune,' he marveled, 'to be so loved by one's people.'²⁵

His postbag might contain a poem couched in *Plattdeutsch* praising the new four year plan; or a letter beginning engagingly, 'As a fanatical female

April 1, 1937

Nazi I make so bold as to —²⁶ His fortieth birthday would bring an avalanche of telegrams ('Those from the people,' he confided to his diary 'are the most touching').²⁷ The party's illustrated newspaper featured 'Our Doctor, as Berlin's gauleiter is called by his Berliners,' at his side with Helmut and his pony, and Helga with the toy sewing machine given her by Hitler.²⁸ Goebbels released a short film to the cinemas, *Paul's Birthday*, featuring himself arriving in yet another brand new car at Maybach, at his country estate, where feudal retainers bowed to him and liveried grooms tended to the children's ponies. Some liked it; moviegoers penned these lines to Magda: 'How proudly in the cinema I saw maternity thus blest. / I cast my mind toward the home / where you have built my nest.'²⁹ Berlin's starving working class however booed the film and Hitler ordered the film withdrawn immediately.³⁰

IGNORING Hitler's call for peace on the church front, Dr Goebbels began a vitriolic campaign against the two main churches that lasted from March until the end of 1937. It began when the Pope issued a pastoral letter critical of Germany on March 21. Goebbels at first persuaded Heydrich not to notify Hitler, arguing that they should merely confiscate the church printing presses which had disseminated it.³¹ As a further response, on April 1—according to Goebbels—Hitler telephoned Heydrich and authorized him to stage a series of show trials against the Catholic clergy. The Nazi prosecutors had a back-file of several hundred unsolved sex cases against Catholic priests. The Catholics, decided Goebbels, *had not properly appreciated the Nazis' patience and moderation.* 'Now let them find out how merciless we can be.'³² He sent Berndt to cover a particularly sleazy case in Belgium, the sex murder of a youngster in a monastery, and persuaded the Reich justice ministry to open the first trials at Koblenz.³³ He ordered sound recordings made, keeping Heydrich closely informed at each stage—or so his diary claimed.³⁴

Goebbels honed the stage-management of these political trials to an art. The first, of Franciscan monks charged with sexual perversity, began in Koblenz late in April.³⁵ He followed the propaganda closely. One priest implicated the bishop of Trier himself. 'That's a bombshell,' chortled Goebbels, savoring his revenge. 'I've had it recorded on discs, in case.'³⁶ He furnished regular summaries of sordid details to Hitler, who swore to 'smoke out' this 'gang of perverts.'³⁷ From Catholic Austria, Ambassador von Papen pleaded with Goebbels to tone down the campaign, fearing an outright ban on German newspapers there. At first the Catholic hierarchy maintained a dignified silence.³⁸ Goebbels hatched further schemes to destroy them—the seizure of the church's assets, and laws to end priestly celibacy to prevent anybody younger than twenty-four studying theology ('I we'll deprive them of their finest raw material'). Hitler however urged caution.³⁹

Just as the Nazi campaign was flagging, Cardinal George Mundelein, archbishop of Chicago, publicly denounced Hitler over the Koblenz trials.

May 28, 1937

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trials. Goebbels, retaliating, began the first trials of protestant clergymen on homosexuality charges too. He inaugurated this new campaign in his biggest speech that spring, from the new Deutschland Halle in Berlin on May 28, 1937.⁴⁰ The state, he declared, was responsible for providing the people with bread, raw materials, currency, cannon, and airplanes; the churches had merely to secure Eternal Happiness—surely, he asked to loud guffaws, that task was big enough for them? He argued that the Nazis had set an example in June 1934: 'over sixty people who tried to cultivate this vice [homosexuality] in the party were shot out of hand; on top of this, the party frankly reported to the nation upon this episode.' The bishops had however become accessories, by shielding those guilty of such practices.⁴¹

Not hesitating to interfere with the legal system, Goebbels dictated stage directions to the public prosecutor at Koblenz, Paul Windhausen, who had the rank of Brigadeführer in the S.A.⁴² (To western eyes it seems offensive, but in Germany throughout the twentieth century prosecutors and judges have always been the capstans of the government in office.) Case files piled up on his desk as he compiled dossiers with all the revolting details.⁴³ Up and down the country that summer the angry priests bravely struck back from their pulpits. Police arrested two of Goebbels' most prominent scourges, Pastor Martin Niemöller and Otto Dibelius.⁴⁴ Dibelius was acquitted—Goebbels called it a slap in the face of the state and got straight on the phone to Hitler. Hitler however ordered all such trials halted for the time being.⁴⁵ Fearing that his Führer was getting cold feet, Goebbels sent Hanke to the Berghof with the most loathsome dossiers, but in vain.⁴⁶ Several times he reverted to the matter, in December 1937 and again in January. But on each occasion Hitler responded that he wanted peace restored on the church front: It was not a battleground of his own choosing.⁴⁷

Without doubt this anti-church campaign damaged Goebbels' reputation both at home and abroad. An open letter, four pages of articulate, closely typed criticism, circulated in Bavaria. It expressed alarm that the *propaganda* minister was seemingly able to dictate which cases to prosecute and when. Referring to Goebbels' speech to a 'well-briefed party mob' at the Deutschland Halle, the pamphlet scoffed that, far from acting swiftly to shoot its leaders for homosexuality, the Nazis had turned a blind eye on them until Röhm and his consorts had got out of hand. The people were sick of the extravagances of the leaders of the so-called Workers' party, the letter continued, what with their country mansions, limousines, and yachts. All of this touched very raw nerves indeed. Goebbels had the authors, a church worker and a lawyer, arrested.⁴⁸

Corrupted by power he was becoming more autocratic, even dictatorial. He arbitrarily forbade his adjutant to touch alcohol for six months. He punished radio station directors for going on a binge. He ordered a careless bus driver arrested.⁴⁹ He took a sterner line at home too—putting little Helga across his knee when she began to fib; and when two-year-old Helmut answered him back, Goebbels paddled the lad too,

scene

March 11 1937

228 III: THE REICH MINISTER

though reluctantly. 'He doesn't give in,' he noted indulgently. 'Not a *bit* sign!'⁵⁰

HIS diary is innocent of any consciousness of his own double standard. He expressed horror at Stalin's show trials, although Hitler had offered his victims even this formality before shooting them in June 1941. He fiercely protected his own Staatssekretär, the podgy Walter Fuhs even while prosecuting the clergy. When Hitler forbade further poking into Funk's sexual perversions, Goebbels breathed into his diary 'Thank goodness.'⁵¹ Lustful in private, he was starkly puritan in public. 'They can have a thousand nude women if they want,' he pontificated. 'But without those nasty, smutty jokes.' He sent for Trude Hesterberg one of the Scala's lovelier singers, and lectured her on the indecency of her act. After visiting the Scala, a burlesque theater, he threatened to have it aryanized or even shut down altogether.⁵² But he disclaimed any aspirations to act as a chastity-overlord: When Heiner Kurzbein, (unfortunately named) chief of his ministry's photographic section, suggested they censor some of the more risqué photos of the 1938 film about Goebbels would overrule him: 'A dollop of healthy eroticism is not out of place,' he declared, 'and far better normal than abnormal.'⁵³

The aryanization of the sub-chambers of the chamber of culture, particularly the chamber of music, would plod on far into 1939.⁵⁴ Fritzsche kept butting in, interceding for individual Jews.⁵⁵ At his speech to the chamber of culture on November 26, 1937 Goebbels would boast that he had completely eliminated the Jew from the artistic life of Germany: 'Imagine my surprise,' wrote Louis Lochner privately, 'when the next day *Musical American* arrives and I read that *with the approval of the German Government* no other person than Yehudi Menuhin . . . a Jew has obtained the right to produce the [newly rediscovered] Schumann [violin] concerto in the USA!'⁵⁶ Elsewhere Goebbels enacted police ordinances to exclude the Jews from stage, screen, and concert performances; he also clamped down harder on their publishing houses and bookstores.⁵⁷ When Jews in the United States protested, led by Max Baer of the *Fiorello La Guardia* of New York, Goebbels banned Jewish and Zionist communal activities in Germany for two months.⁵⁸ After Nazi hooligans smashed the windows of Jewish stores in Danzig, the international clamor resumed.⁵⁹ Goebbels aryanized Germany's remaining Jewish-owned theaters and turfed the last Jews out of Germany's recording industry. To break the Jewish near-monopoly on overseas film distribution, he arranged with Alfred Hess, Rudolf's brother, to use the party's Foreign Organization, the AO, instead.⁶¹

In March 1937, using precisely the methods that he had previously branded as Jewish, Goebbels took over the major Ufa film company in the Reich. As a warning to Ufa he had instructed the press to trash its latest production; the film flopped disastrously, and the company agreed to sell out.⁶² 'Today we buy up Ufa,' recorded Goebbels, 'and thus [the propaganda ministry] are the biggest film, press, theater, and r

March, 1937

concern in the world.⁶³ Dismissing the entire Ufa board, he began to intervene in film production at every level, dismissing directors, recommending actresses (like the fiery Spaniard, Imperio Argentina), forcing through innovations like color cinematography, and rationalizing screen-test facilities for all three major studios, Ufa, Tobis, and Bavaria.⁶⁴ Depriving the distributors of any say in such matters he created instead artistic boards to steer future film production. Suddenly the film industry began to surge ahead. Blockbuster films swept the box offices. With a sure touch, Goebbels stopped the production of pure propaganda and party epics, opting for more subtle messages instead—the wholesome family, the life well spent.

Until then the status of the acting profession had been lowly. He changed all that. He converted the old Rathenau villa on Skagerrak Platz into an Artistes' Club. Its lush furnishings, its dimly lit cocktail bar, and its dance floor made it a popular haunt for raffishly dressed actors, actresses with plunging necklines, and strutting officials of the Nazi party. Both Magda and Dr Goebbels often went there—though seldom in each other's company.

ALTHOUGH he strives to conceal it from his diary, Joseph Goebbels' infatuation with the ravishingly beautiful Lida Baarova has grown more hopeless. The 1937 diary mentions her name without special emphasis, but he carelessly spills enough clues around for the researcher to grasp what is happening. 'Strolled in the park and talked with Magda,' he writes dutifully. 'She is so nice and adorable. I have taken her into my heart.' Then, 'I drive on out to Bogensee'—the lake at Lanke on which he now has his isolated little wooden house.⁶⁵ It is out here, in the depths of the forest, that somebody is usually waiting for him. These are, it may be recalled, the very days when Hitler's Cabinet is solemnly discussing fierce new laws on divorce and adultery. 'Out to Bogensee in the afternoon,' he writes the next day, having again left Magda in Berlin. 'Some music, reading, and writing.' That month he takes a special interest in Lida's latest film, the spy-thriller *Patriots*, being made for Ufa. He reviews the screen-tests, discusses the story line with director Karl Ritter ('It must get a nationalist slant'), and reworks the filmplay himself; on January 25, he goes out to Babelsberg to watch shooting begin.⁶⁶ Viewing the first takes, he finds Lida's acting wonderful. 'The farewell and final scene are deeply touching,' he writes.⁶⁷ He becomes addicted to re-runs of her earlier movies. After watching her and Gustav Fröhlich in *Barcarole* on February 23—after seeing the very scene she had been performing when he and Hitler first set eyes on her at the studios—he tells the diary, 'La Ba[a]rova's acting is wonderful, moving, and heart-breaking.' (Fröhlich however is 'a little twirp who can't act').⁶⁸

A few days earlier all three have been involved in a silly incident outside Fröhlich's villa on Schwanenwerder. With Magda in the maternity clinic since February 2, Goebbels is often lonely in the evenings. Twice that month he drives out to his own empty villa on the peninsula (the house

scenes

1937

at Lanke is being ventilated).⁶⁹ Early on one of these evenings Lida arrives at Gustav's villa; later, hearing a limousine, she steps out into the street to greet her lover but finds Goebbels inside instead with his chauffeur Alfred Rach at the wheel.

'Hello!' exclaims the minister. 'What brings you out in the middle of the night?'

She puts one foot on the running board and explains, 'I'm waiting for Gustl. He's got a première.'

Even as they exchange these brief pleasantries, Fröhlich himself drops in. He leaps out, white with rage, and grabs Lida's arm, perhaps slapping her. 'Well, Herr Minister,' he snaps, assuming that she has stepped out of the limousine. 'Now we know where we stand!'

Goebbels acts astonished. 'What was that about?' he asks Lida.

The actress stammers apologies for her lover. When Fröhlich enters his villa, he finds Lida's handbag already there and realizes his mistake.⁷⁰ Fröhlich phones an abject apology to Goebbels. The minister records only one further meeting with him, in May 1937—ostensibly they chat about casting and taxation problems, and they trade social gossip. 'Fröhlich,' he mocks in his diary, 'is of consummate stupidity. A few weeks later he makes a note to look for a good man to play opposite Lida.'⁷²

Soliciting Lida more persistently, Goebbels often phones her at home. She has no objections. Once, he hears her doorbell ring and the phone being snatched from her; then Fröhlich screaming into the telephone 'Who is that?' The minister can hear the betrayed lover raging at 'It's Goebbels, isn't it? I knew it! How long has this been going on? Well, through! Our love is dead—we are standing at its graveside.' Up to that point, in fact, no intimacies have passed between her and the minister. She moves out, renting a fine villa, No. 14 Taubert Strasse, in Grunewald. Initially he keeps his interest in her a close secret. How to see her privately, he once directs her to prepare dinner for ten at Grunewald home, and to join him seemingly unexpectedly that evening in a box at the Scala where she is to invite him and his entourage to home for dinner. Play acting, Goebbels looks completely surprised. 'Gentlemen,' he says, 'shall we accept?' All do so with alacrity, except for Hanke, who comes along in bad grace. Goebbels never visits Grunewald villa alone.⁷⁴

Lida Baarova moves out of Fröhlich's life, and Goebbels gives her key to the barrier on the back road to the Lanke villa. Emotionally she becomes his slave—and he hers. They spend days together at Lanke with him playing the piano, and her dozing on a sofa or reading. Their relationship is almost platonic. For a year sex hardly comes into it—then only for weeks rather than months. She does not even notice he wears a leg-brace. They sleep in different rooms—Kaiser tiptoes each morning at five A.M. to wake her, as they both have early starts to Berlin.⁷⁵ If Goebbels cannot get away from the ministry, he commands her to be at the other end of an open phone line: From time to time

July 1937

picks up the earpiece just to hear her breathing. Sometimes she drives into Voss Strasse and walks past, for him to adore her from his window across the street.⁷⁶ Once, out at Lanke, he commands her to show him how she will recognize him if things go wrong and they meet only in Heaven; she walks a few yards, turns round, and, a consummate actress, plays the little cameo role to perfection.⁷⁷

Throughout 1937 the affair warms up, while he consequently neglects Magda. The doctors have warned him after Holde's birth that his wife must not get pregnant for two more years. 'I'll see to that,' promises Goebbels, and whiles away the afternoon with a film actress with professional problems ('I believe I can help her').⁷⁸ Two or three days later he helps another actress to the best of his ability, noting afterwards. 'She's a good sort.'⁷⁹ Having meanwhile met the young sculptress Barbara von Kalckreuth in a train, he sits for her in his snow-decked villa at Lanke and she gets twenty more diary entries over the next three years.⁸⁰ He sits for famous sculptor Arno Breker too; Breker rates only three mentions over the same period, one of them a terse: 'Never again.'⁸¹

On visits to Magda at the clinic her jealous tirades drive their relationship almost to destruction.⁸² His diary celebrates her homecoming on March 23 most touchingly. 'She is my One and All. When she's not there, house and home lie empty and desolate.'⁸³ With Magda home again, he fills Schwanenwerder with friends from the film industry like the Veit Harlans, the Willy Birgels, the Höpfner sisters, and Lida Baarova. 'Magda is again the most beautiful of all,' he writes, helplessly caught between the two women. 'Women are a plague on us all,' he reflects in April.⁸⁴ In July he discusses his wife's indifferent health with Ilse Hess, who writes to Magda: 'Your husband told me that he's worried about you, and that you ought to have a pause to recuperate before getting down to the next five offspring you've promised the Führer and the Third Reich.'⁸⁵

Caring little for the needs of his own Berliners, but at their expense, he sequesters still more of the forest terrain surrounding his villa at Lanke. Labour Service gangs clear paths and erect boardwalks through 'my forest,' as he brazenly terms it, and begin laying down a private beach with a little jetty.⁸⁶ Officials import swans and wild duck to the lake.⁸⁷ On Hanke's advice he commissions Hitler's young architect Albert Speer to redesign his official residence in Hermann-Göring Strasse.⁸⁸ As he watches the newly imported reindeer stealing across his lawn at Lanke, he is becoming more detached than ever from the ordinary Berliners to whom he owes so much, yet Hitler still does nothing against this blatant corruption.

Goebbels proudly shows him the new Baarova film *Patriots* and hastens out to Lanke afterward to tell her that it has delighted him. Twice that May Hitler comes over to Schwanenwerder to cruise aboard the Goebbels yacht, surrounded by the latest handsome women in the minister's life. And once, as they again cruise alone among the blossoms of Potsdam, Hitler unburdens himself to Goebbels about his secret, innermost

Scene?

alpha and
Omega
alternates
like flowers in
wind.

1937

ambition—to undo for ever the humiliation done to Germany by Peace of Westphalia which had concluded the Thirty Years' War in 1645 greatly to her disadvantage.⁸⁹

ENCOURAGED by these confidences, Goebbels publicly stated his view on foreign affairs. Speaking in Berlin on February 12, 1937 of the Czech alliance with Moscow he warned, 'Let the world take note that Germany is a great power.' London bridled.⁹⁰ He got on well with new British ambassador, Sir Nevile Henderson, and both men hoped that if Britain's new prime minister Neville Chamberlain could only ^{reach} in the Jewish press clamor there was a real chance of rapprochement despite all the gaucheries that the new Nazi ambassador Ribbentrop committing in London.⁹¹

Hitler had no firm plan of action mapped out as yet. Like Goebbels he believed in the Goddess of Good Fortune—in seizing opportunities as they arose.⁹² Goebbels had however begun preparing his ministry war: At Hitler's instigation he had started to build a cable radio system (*Drahtfunk*) which would free transmitter capacity for a propaganda while rendering the German listening public impervious to enemy radio propaganda.⁹³ He issued contracts for five powerful one-megawatt transmitters.⁹⁴

By this time, though without perceptible immediate cause, he became concerned about his own safety. He underwent pistol training and in December 1937 he called off at the last minute a private trip to Egypt which he had been planning for three months—one phone call from Rudolf Hess, warning of possible risks, sufficed. 'On occasion reported the British embassy, 'he has shown a certain nervousness at his own skin.'⁹⁶

Political events in Central Europe were slowly building up their own head of steam. At the end of July 1937 Goebbels staged a spectacular choral festival at Breslau. Among the thirty thousand Germans from overseas was a large contingent from Austria. The Austrians chanted Goebbels' latest slogan, 'Ein Reich—ein Volk!' There were emotive scenes in the main square as the massed choirs marched past. News cameras whirled. The spectacle remained engraved on the memory of every member of Hitler's staff. 'For a quarter of an hour the procession halts,' wrote Goebbels, 'the people just standing still, singing, laughing, weeping.' Everybody knew what Hitler was thinking at that moment, he said later. When—it was now no longer a question of if—they were marching into Austria, hardly a shot would be fired. He showed Hitler the newsreels two days later, but Hitler ordered him not to release them to avoid reprisals against Austrians seen cheering.⁹⁷

On the day after Breslau, Hitler visited Schwanenwerder—Goebbels' sister was celebrating her engagement—and again took him into confidence. He planned to make a 'clean sweep' in Austria. 'Let's live we all live to see that day,' wrote Goebbels. He day-dreamed about the Führer's triumphal entry into Vienna. After that, he mused, it would

Hess: the
Jews have
entree
Egypt!

D. T.
A.H. is
Beranay
from the
now. then
is a
Pauze
in
representing
the summit
of the
establishment
that is
profoundly
self-censuring
and of the
as I have
discovered
a chant
could. now
in the
storm

ⓧ secret

1937

Czechoslovakia's turn.⁹⁸ At the Nuremberg rally in September the Austrian contingent again staged an emotional scene. Here Hitler assured Goebbels: 'Austria will be dealt with one day by force.'⁹⁹

→ Here, Dr. T.
can influence him again
another scene from the platform.

DR GOEBBELS does these things well,' remarked one British official dryly, after reading his fifty-page speech at Nuremberg, yet another attack on bolshevism and the Jews.¹⁰⁰ In Russia, said Goebbels, Stalin had murdered forty-two thousand priests; in Spain, his agents had already killed seventeen thousand priests and monks by February; yet the world resounded with squawks of horror if one Jew in Germany had his ears deservedly boxed. The Jew, he said, was a parasite, 'the destroyer of culture, the ferment of decomposition.' Hitler's line again varied only marginally from Goebbels'. The Führer had nominated Professor Ernst Sauerbruch as joint winner of the new National Prize, despite objections from Goebbels that the surgeon was a 'vassal of the Jews.' To circumvent criticism Goebbels now asked the surgeon at least to join the party. Sauerbruch politely declined.¹⁰¹

Opinion was divided about Goebbels' relationship with Hitler. Which was the evil genius, and which the spellbound princeling? George Ward Price, the perceptive *Daily Mail* journalist, was emphatic that Goebbels was more dangerous even than Himmler, because he committed Hitler to courses of action by presenting him with *faits accomplis*.¹⁰² (The presidential election, the trials of the priests, the later pogroms against the Jews, and total war are all supporting examples.) Only rarely did Hitler actually apply the brake: In November for instance he phoned Goebbels to back off on their colonial demands.¹⁰³ When Goebbels initiated a raucous campaign against the Czech government, alleging maltreatment of their German ethnic minority, first the Sudeten German leader Konrad Henlein and then Hitler asked him to slow down.¹⁰⁴ Over lunch at the chancellery the Führer reminded him that Germany could not do anything about it yet 'The Czechs,' sulked Goebbels, 'are crazy. They are surrounded by a hundred million enemies whose land and people they have usurped. Na, prost!' he exclaimed, ironically toasting them. Before lunch ended Hitler had again told him to downplay both the colonial and the church problems. 'We must keep our propaganda powder dry,' agreed Goebbels.¹⁰⁵

scene

THAT afternoon however, in Goebbels' absence, Hitler called a secret Cabinet-level meeting at which he revealed to his foreign minister and his commanders-in-chief his intention to launch a war of territorial conquest, beginning with a 'lightning attack' on Czechoslovakia during 1938.¹⁰⁶

scene

Winning over Britain in the meanwhile, without offending Mussolini, would be a challenge.¹⁰⁷ Here Goebbels was a greater hindrance than Ribbentrop. Although Ambassador Henderson respected Goebbels, his principal officials believed that the minister was trying to whip up anti-British sentiment.¹⁰⁸ This was not true. While mocking the hypocrisy of

... ..

1937

234 III: THE REICH MINISTER

the English, he echoed Hitler's regrets that they were losing their empire. He blamed this on the foolish statesmanship of Eden (now British foreign secretary), and compared him unfavorably with Lord Halifax, the Lord Privy Seal, who was visiting Germany for Göring's international hunt exhibition.¹⁰⁹

Goebbels took tea with this aristocratic English statesman, this 'very calm, collected, and clever' Cabinet minister, and pleaded with him to rein in Britain's unruly, sensation-hungry editors.¹¹⁰ He drew attention to his own newspapers' restraint during the British abdication crisis: 'I had expected to dislike him [Goebbels] intensely,' confessed Halifax in his own private diary, '—but didn't. I suppose it must be some moral defect in me, but the fact remains.'¹¹¹

Jan 1938

28: Something about March

ONCE in 1937 Harald Quandt, now sixteen, tiptoes into his stepfather's study at Schwanenwerder and finds him writing in a diary. He sees three other diaries on the desk. Consumed by curiosity, in 1938 he picks the lock, rummages around, and finds one of the notebooks; to his disappointment the handwriting is illegible.¹

Joseph Goebbels has now filled sixteen such books, and he has begun a seventeenth, as usual with a motto: 'Don't look back, keep marching on!' This 1938 volume will cover 476 closely written pages.* Probably he himself no longer knows why he is writing a diary. Few diarists do. It would take a psychiatrist to explain the narcissistic self-pity, the recurring proclamations of dire physical exhaustion, and the broad hints at Magda's infidelities (which were clearly not intended for publication in this form.) The text is often stupefyingly banal, and he no longer reveals *all* to the diary that was once his 'dear therapeutic conscience.'² Thus the new 1938 volume will draw a veil across his politically subversive views, as well as his own familial misdemeanors. The diary tells us of his profound misgivings about Hitler's brinkmanship only *after* the Munich agreement has removed the threat of war; and we hear nothing of Lida Baarova at all.

THE first weeks of 1938 had brought an important reorganization of his ministry, originating in Hjalmar Schacht's replacement as minister of economics by Goebbels' Staatssekretär Walter Funk, a move which Goebbels himself had suggested.³ Funk had been the government's press spokesman, and Hitler appointed the party's press chief Otto Dietrich to the vacant position. 'I've just promoted you to Staatssekretär,' Hitler called out to Dietrich as he walked past. 'Minister Goebbels hasn't signed it yet, but he will—you can bank on that.'⁴ Goebbels moved swiftly—his dislike for Dietrich was by now notorious—and divided up Funk's old functions, promoting his trusted chief aide Karl Hanke to senior Staatssekretär along with Dietrich.⁵ To Hanke's old post as personal assistant Goebbels appointed at his recommendation on December 6, 1937 Dr

* Transcribed and annotated by the author on behalf of Arnoldo Mondadori Editore, Milan, this previously unknown Goebbels diary, February 11 to October 26, 1938, is published as *Der unbekannte Dr. Goebbels. Die geheimen Tagebücher 1938* by Focal Point, London, 1995.

1938

Werner Naumann, the former chief of propaganda in Breslau.⁶

At the time, Naumann was only twenty-eight. Tall, slim, and athletic he was a fanatical believer in National Socialism with the accent, while Goebbels too placed it, on the latter word. At seventeen he had already been concerned about the prevailing social injustices in Germany; a young man had invited him to a Nazi discussion evening and he had fallen in with them at once, joining the party late in 1928; in Berlin he had befriended Horst Wessel, and worked on Goebbels' propaganda in Berlin in 1929. Voluble and hard-working, self-assured but modest, Naumann would become Goebbels' closest confidant, outlasting all others, and in the final days succeeding him as minister.⁷ His party record had in fact one serious flaw: In 1933 he had become commander of the 9 S.A. Brigade in Stettin and at the time of the Röhm putsch he was S.A. Standartenführer. After trying unsuccessfully to flee that day he was relieved of his command, and imprisoned for eight weeks accused of having known of the plot. 'Naumann,' his successor Friedrich Spitefiel reported, 'a §175er [homosexual], was introduced to Pomerania by Heines. He got No. 9 Brigade, Stettin, immediately. Heydebreck and Naumann were close friends.'⁸ (The S.A. commanders Heines, Heydebreck, and Sprei—all his friends—were shot.) Accused too of homosexuality and of permitting financial irregularities in his brigade, Naumann had been expelled from the S.A., and then from the party on December 3, 1934. He had returned to university in 1935, studied oriental languages, and gained a doctorate in politics before being rehabilitated in 1936 when the principal accusations against him proved unfounded.

In his little speech introducing Hanke and Dietrich to their respective staffs, Goebbels made clear that Dietrich would have no say in the ministry, and that his preferred confidant was Hanke.⁹ His faith in Hanke, this handsome, dynamic Silesian, was unspoken and implicit. Hanke gained automatic in-and-out access to Hitler's chancellery.¹⁰ He was privy to Goebbels' tax affairs,¹¹ he had introduced him to the architect Albert Speer, he would undertake delicate missions for him.¹² Goebbels gave him the keys to his private dispatch box—an act of trust which ultimately led to his undoing, because Hanke became an even firmer friend and adviser of Magda too.

From now until 1945 Otto Dietrich was a thorn in Goebbels' flesh. He claimed to be not the subordinate of Reich minister Goebbels, Staatssekretär, but his equal as Reichsleiter, with only Hitler having the authority to arbitrate between them; and since he was attached to Hitler's personal staff he—and not Goebbels—effectively controlled the essential political news output of the daily press. Nor was Goebbels' ministry able to attach its own man to Hitler's headquarters as Ribbentrop, Rosenberg, and Göring had for example attached Hewel, Koeppe, Bodenschatz, and the military adjutants. The minister swore later that Dietrich was not even a real Reichsleiter—he had had a tailor run up a fantasy uniform for him as 'Reichspressechef' to which he had stitch

Naumann
Dietrich
1928-36

Aug 1937

SOMETHING ABOUT MARCH 237

the same badges of rank as a Reichsleiter; Hitler, said Goebbels, had good-naturedly allowed Dietrich his conceit.¹³ There is a ring of authenticity about the story.

As a storm rumbles and lashes the little lake at Lanke in August 1937, Goebbels finds it too melancholy there and drives back to Berlin where he sends for Lida's film *Patriots* once more.¹⁴ He and Magda are drifting apart. As in 1936, she stays away from the 1937 Nuremberg rally. Unhappy at the multiplying rumors of her husband's behavior, she accusingly sends him a copy of the communist *Red Flag* which contains the latest scandal. Goebbels splutters, 'A pack of bloody lies,' and buys her off with a silver coffee service.¹⁵ Despite all her doctor's warnings she has become pregnant again. Professor Walter Stoeckel, her gynecologist, urges her to withdraw entirely from social life and to rest out at Schwanenwerder.¹⁶ Goebbels spends more and more time out at Lanke, although Lida is not always there. Now approaching the apogee of her career, she often films in Prague as well as in Babelsberg.¹⁷ For whatever the reason Goebbels spends much of his time away from Magda and the children. His diary makes no explicit comment on this, but notes the days when he is with his home and family.¹⁸ No matter how late he arrives when visiting Schwanenwerder, he wraps his toddlers in blankets and shows them the latest movie. They become his best critics. He records Helga's cute praise for Mussolini, paying a state visit to Berlin: 'The other Führer's quite nice too!' she says.¹⁹

There is no doubt about his own favorite filmstar. In October 1937 he reads a film treatment of Dostoyevsky's novel *The Gambler*. The lead role goes to Lida Baarova. She signs up with the Tobis studios to play Rosalinde in a film version of *Die Fledermaus*. Simultaneously she makes a successful stage debut in Berlin, taking the title role in Hermann Bahr's *Josephine* in December. Goebbels rapturously leads the applause, and is enchanted all over again by his Liduschka's performance.²⁰ 'I have never loved another woman as much as you,' he confesses to her.

The raise in his ministerial salary has resolved some problems, but invited others.²¹ Magda has inspected a tempting neighboring lot at Schwanenwerder, Nos 12/14 Insel Strasse. It is owned by a Jew, Samuel Goldschmidt, director of the Goldschmidt-Rothschild bank.²² Goebbels' friend Dr Lippert, erstwhile editor of *Angriff* and now mayor of Berlin, forces Goldschmidt to sell it to the city for only 117,500 marks; after the sale, Goebbels emerges as the real purchaser.²³ He will rebuild this art deco building, converting its stables into a private cinema and the house into what he calls his *Burg* (citadel)—another refuge from Magda and her tantrums. Sometimes he will withdraw to his citadel with a guest, explaining to Magda with a heartless wink that he wants to play the latest records to her.²⁴ Thus all seems set in December 1937 for a ménage à trois—as soon as Lida is ready. On the eleventh he drives out to Schwanenwerder, talks things over with Magda, and decides to move next door 'to get some peace.'²⁵ They have been married for six years.

1937 → 1938

238 III: THE REICH MINISTER

'We are all so happy,' he hypocritically informs his diary. 'The children are playing all around us. I am sitting in my new home in the next-door house. Deep snow lies round about. Slept in.'²⁶

Often that January of 1938 he drives out to Lanke where his villa is embedded in snow so deep that his new Maybach barely gets through. Is Lida out there? We don't know. Occasionally he drives into Berlin to see his family, to play some music, and deliberately lose a few hands of Black Peter to Helga before driving back to spend the night at Lanke and his ministry.²⁷ In his ministry too he is installing a little boudoir, so that he can devote more time to his work there; it is a tastefully furnished bachelor apartment with a bedroom, a bathroom, and an array of bells pushed to inform his staff when he does not wish to be disturbed.²⁸

Simultaneously work will begin on the reconstruction of his official residence. On January 16 Hitler gives the go-ahead. The Goebbels spend hours more or less happily poring over Professor Baumgarten's plaster model and blueprints; the funds are requisitioned, and on April 27 the wreckers and bricklayers move in. 'I say my farewells to the rooms I have loved so much,' writes Goebbels with false pathos: 'really hurts. I clear things out and pack, and find manuscripts from my childhood that seem pretty ridiculous today... So adieu, dear home. Now let the pickaxes swing.'²⁹

There is one snag. Lida Baarova wants to be no part of his planned ménage. Fearing that she is trapped, she momentarily goes to England to talk with the talent scouts that Metro-Goldwyn-Mayer have sent from Hollywood. Gustav Fröhlich persuades her to show them his photos to Robert Taylor and Maureen O'Sullivan plead with her to leave Berlin. Nothing comes of it, but at the next gala gathering of the film world at the Kroll opera house in Berlin Goebbels will warn darkly that the German film industry is not a haven for Hollywood's cast-offs. 'If anybody else leaves for Hollywood,' he declares, 'they'll find they can't get back into Germany when they fail.'³⁰ Miss Baarova interprets this threat directed against her. But Goebbels has others in his sights too, like Luitpold Ullrich, another popular star who has designs on Hollywood.³¹

Bulky with her new unborn child, Magda is stuck out at Schwannenberg. She is hoping for another boy, to be called Hartmann Harder.³² She seldom has enough funds for the household running costs and property taxes.³³ The purchase of the second property has strained their resources; early in 1938 Goebbels moves his mother in with Magda and there are always shoals of other house-guests. His visits to Schwannenberg are punctuated by acrimonious scenes. The more he promotes his family-man image in the media however, the less time he actually seems to spend with them.³⁴

HIS real close family was one man now, Adolf Hitler. More than once in January 1938 the Führer had long private consultations with Goebbels on affairs well outside his fief—asking for example whom he should now appoint to the German embassies in Rome, Paris, and Bucharest.

Jan 12, 1938

SOMETHING ABOUT MARCH 239

(Goebbels portentously started a card index for key future appointments).³⁵ When Hitler decided to replace his foreign minister he informed Goebbels two weeks before breaking it to the victim, Neurath.³⁶ Goebbels frankly warned him that Ribbentrop, the suggested successor, was a 'zero'.³⁷ When it came to naming their latest new battleship (the Bismarck) Hitler again consulted Goebbels.³⁸ During the major scandal now almost upon them, the Blomberg-Fritsch scandal, Hitler and Goebbels would be closeted together for hours on end. Surprisingly, Goebbels would recommend the ultra-conservative chief of general staff, General Ludwig Beck, against the radical Nazi Walther von Reichenau to succeed Fritsch as the army's commander-in-chief.³⁹

THE broad outlines of the Field Marshal Blomberg scandal are now well known. On December 14 the war minister, nearly sixty, had unblushingly revealed to Goebbels his intention of marrying a young girl of common stock. Seemingly not appreciating quite how common this twenty-four-year-old's stock had been, Goebbels wished him luck.⁴⁰ Both Hitler and Göring officiated as witnesses at the field marshal's hasty wedding on January 12 (the girl had told him she was pregnant).

The crisis burst upon them soon after. At Hitler's lunch table on the twenty-fifth Goebbels detected a certain tension in the air. Aided by an unusually jovial Göring he tried to cheer Hitler up, but it was already too late.⁴¹ Helldorff, now police chief of Berlin, told his friend Goebbels that Blomberg's bride had a criminal record for peddling pornographic photographs featuring herself. He showed Goebbels the police dossier—it was 'hair raising.' Obviously Blomberg had landed Hitler and Göring in a hideous position. Goebbels was speechless with rage at the injury the field marshal had done to his idol. Twice he hinted that any honorable officer should shoot himself.⁴² But Blomberg merely resigned as war minister on the pretext of ill-health, and left on a world tour with his bride (who turned out not to be pregnant after all).

This was just the start of Hitler's problems. Who should succeed Blomberg? Göring? General von Fritsch? Himmler now charged that the latter, though the obvious candidate, had once been blackmailed as a closet homosexual. This scandalized Hitler. Since the Röhm affair, his eyes glazed at the slightest mention of homosexuality. Goebbels suggested that Hitler himself take over Blomberg's position, thus becoming supreme commander in one step.⁴³ Fritsch did not however stand aside without a fight. He denied the allegation of homosexuality, on his word as an officer, and he did not even crack under the Gestapo's grilling.⁴⁴ 'It's one man's word against another,' perceived Goebbels, fascinated by Hitler's dilemma: 'That of a homosexual blackmailer against that of the army's commander-in-chief.' But Hitler no longer trusted Fritsch, and there was the rub. Innocent or guilty, the general was doomed even though he refused, to Himmler's dismay, to confess.⁴⁵ 'Heydrich has conducted several all-night interrogations,' recorded Goebbels equally perplexed. 'Fritsch is taking it all on the chin, but standing up to him.'⁴⁶

⊕ If his own
had ceased
to exist.

Febr. 5, 1938

240 III: THE REICH MINISTER

Goebbels' problems as propaganda minister were also beginning juicy rumors washed around Berlin. He spent sleepless nights, he even saw Hitler in tears with worry.⁴⁷ He promised to keep the lid firmly things. He suggested that it would help if Hitler chose now to carry a reshuffle of both his Cabinet and armed forces. 'The damage that a woman can do!' gasped Goebbels, as the hit lists were drawn up. 'A that kind of woman too!'⁴⁸

Hitler announced his reshuffle to his ministers at eight P.M. on February 5, 1938. Goebbels' diary provides the only detailed record of this, the last formal Cabinet meeting ever held.⁴⁹ Struggling to do justice to both Blomberg and Fritsch and choking with emotion, Hitler spoke of the personal tragedies that had obliged them to resign. He announced that he himself would take over as supreme commander (as Goebbels had suggested).

For a few days the world's press seethed with fierce but ill-informed speculation—what Goebbels called 'horror stories.'⁵⁰ He directed the rough-and-ready lieutenant Berndt to scatter dust in the eyes of the press corps in Berlin.⁵¹ 'He had the nerve to tell us,' recorded an American journalist, 'that Blomberg's resignation was due solely to reasons of health (yet he was healthy enough to marry!).'⁵² To an equally skeptical Dutch pressman Berndt tactlessly flared, 'What would you say if our newspapers were to state that the baby just born to your royal family isn't really [Crown Princess] Juliana's baby!'⁵³ Unimpressed, the foreign journalists still churned out 'horror stories.' So Goebbels told Berndt to go to the whole hog and plant rumors that Hitler intended invading France. The newshounds went yelping off after that scent instead. It all provided an interesting example of news-management. 'Anything is better than the truth,' reflected the propaganda minister, in a departure from his normal

LAYING a second smoke screen Hitler briefly⁵⁵—as he imagined—an unexpectedly turned to Austria. He summoned Austria's chancellor Kurt Schuschnigg to the Berghof on February 12. No formal record was taken of Hitler's blustering, ranting threats but he boasted with some relish to Goebbels afterward of how he had talked 'pretty tough' with Schuschnigg on a list of demands, and had threatened to get satisfaction by force ('guns speak louder than words').⁵⁶ 'It was not just an ultimatum summarized Goebbels. 'It was a threat of war. Schuschnigg was shattered.'⁵⁷ Under a secret protocol agreed between them Austria guaranteed to model her foreign and military policy on Germany's, and to call a truce in the press war; Schuschnigg was also to appoint the Austrian lawyer Arthur Seyss-Inquart (described by Goebbels as 'our man') minister of the interior. In return Hitler agreed to refrain from interfering in Austria's domestic affairs.⁵⁸

Four days after the Berghof meeting, Schuschnigg's Cabinet agreed to Hitler's diktats. 'The world's press rages,' observed Goebbels, 'as it speaks—not entirely—unjustly—of rape.'⁵⁹ Hitler formally thanked Schuschnigg in the Reichstag on the twentieth. In private he added

March 2, 1938

SOMETHING ABOUT MARCH 241

that he envisaged cutting a similar deal with Prague when the time came, although he warned Goebbels that the Czech president Edouard Beneš was a far more deadly opponent, 'a crafty, squinty-eyed little rat.'⁶⁰

For all his other sins, Hitler did adhere to the Berghof agreement. When two Austrian Nazi leaders visiting Munich on February 25 still talked of staging a coup, he forbade them to return.⁶¹ Schuschnigg was less scrupulous. After the newly re-emancipated Nazis staged big demonstrations in Graz and Vienna he called out the army against them, in violation of the agreement. Goebbels directed the German press to hold its tongue.⁶²

He had other things on his mind—principally the trial of Pastor Niemöller, arrested seven months earlier on sedition charges.⁶³ As the still overly conservative ministry of justice set aside a full two weeks for a public trial, all Goebbels' hatreds boiled over. 'Lawyers are all mentally defective,' he had written the year before.⁶⁴ He pleaded for a two- or three-day trial *in camera*, followed by Niemöller's swift and permanent removal from public view. Hitler himself had ruled that Niemöller was never to be turned loose again.⁶⁵ Was that not an edict simple enough for even the most pettifogging lawyer to understand? When the trial began on February 7, however, the court refused to impose reporting restrictions and allowed the pastor an entire day to reminisce about his career.⁶⁶ Goebbels persuaded the court to go into closed session. At this Niemöller's lawyers walked out.⁶⁷

These were the kind of tactics that Goebbels himself had used against the catspaw courts of the Weimar regime, and now, used against him, they stung. When a brave civil servant, Ernst Brandenburg, testified for the pastor, Goebbels had him dismissed from the party.⁶⁸ On March 2 the judges handed down a derisory sentence on Niemöller, allowing his immediate discharge. Exploding with wrath, Goebbels released only the briefest press notice.⁶⁹ Hitler directed Himmler to have the pastor removed by a back door from the courthouse and taken straight to Oranienburg concentration camp. 'He won't be set free again,' triumphed Goebbels.⁷⁰

HIMMLER'S organs did have their uses. Mostly however Goebbels gave a wide berth to the Reichsführer now. 'His entire being breathes sterility,' he decided. 'He is a little man without an ounce of style. Ignore.'⁷¹ When Reinhard Heydrich, Himmler's executive chief, started sniping at Taubert, the minister fired off a terse rebuke. The police, he noted, might poke their nose in elsewhere, 'but not here!'⁷² Once, Helldorff warned him against his personal assistant Fritz Ehrhardt, pointing out that he also held the rank of Hauptsturmführer (captain) in Himmler's security service, the S.D. 'When I became police chief of Berlin,' explained Helldorff, 'I removed from my staff every S.S. officer who was working for the S.D. I advise you to do the same.'⁷³

Goebbels' doubt about whether Himmler had any code of ethics was

March 10, 1938

242 III: THE REICH MINISTER

soon resolved. After Helldorff revealed something of the Gestapo's spy techniques, Goebbels exclaimed in his diary, 'We're heading toward world of informers and sneaks.'⁷⁴ Helldorff, Hanke, and Lutze told Goebbels that everybody was now surrounded by a vast network of Gestapo informers. All this informing—which seemed particularly worrying to him—was not only stupid but despicable. 'It just begets cowardice, terror, and hypocrisy,' he felt. 'I just can't believe it all,' he wrote on March 1. 'The [Gestapo] methods in the fight against Fritsch are very honorable.' The case exposed Himmler in all his treachery. The general had demanded a court martial to clear his name. The pre-investigation threw a most unsavory light on Gestapo methods. 'They can prove hardly anything against him,' wrote Goebbels. 'They should never have dragged in the Führer.'⁷⁵ Hitler expressed to him serious concern about the investigation. Goebbels learned that it was not going at all smoothly.⁷⁶ Goltz, now acting for the general, had established beyond doubt that the Gestapo had cynically framed him using the dossier of an army captain *Frisch*.

This really was a horror story, and it all came out when the court martial, which had been convened on March 10 and immediately adjourned (as we shall see), was resumed on the seventeenth. Goebbels wrote: 'The entire thing seems to be based on mistaken identity. Very nasty,' he wrote, adding with unconcealed satisfaction, 'above all I hate Himmler. . . . The Führer's quite annoyed.'⁷⁷ Fritsch was acquitted. Hitler sent him a handwritten apology and handsomely exonerated him in a speech to his generals.⁷⁸ Goebbels was delighted, both for Fritsch's sake and because it was 'a terrible put-down for Himmler.'⁷⁹ 

It is
still
convinced
that
Fritsch
is
homosexual.

THE Fritsch trial had been held over from March 10, 1938 by dramatic new developments.

In the last few days Hitler and Goebbels had paid remarkably little attention to Austria; their private conversations had gyrated around Czechoslovakia instead. 'The Führer is pleased to see Prague being intransigent,' Goebbels had recorded. 'All the more surely will she be torn to pieces one day.'⁸⁰ When Schuschnigg on March 9 broadcast his plan to hold a referendum on the Berghof agreement, Goebbels, diverted by a farewell party at the ministry for Funk, rated it merely a 'rotten trick.'⁸¹ Hitler however had seen his golden opportunity. He summoned Goebbels out of a meeting with editors later that evening. Over at the chancellery the minister found Göring called in too. By staging his 'stupid and crass plebiscite,' Hitler snorted, Schuschnigg was trying to outsmart them. Goebbels was fired by Hitler's enthusiasm for action. He suggested they send a thousand planes over Austria to drop leaflets, then 'active intervention.'⁸²

His newly found 1938 diary makes clear how closely he consulted with Hitler over the next hours and days. In deliberations that would last until five A.M. on Thursday the tenth Hitler mapped out his 'very drastic' plan to Goebbels and the Austrian general Edmund von Glaise-Horstenau:

March, 1938

SOMETHING ABOUT MARCH 243

The latter, a Nazi, had been foisted on Schuschnigg's Cabinet by the Berghof agreement. He paled at the possible consequences of a German invasion, but not Hitler. 'He believes the hour has come,' wrote Goebbels. 'Just wants to sleep on it. Says that Italy and Britain won't do anything. . . . That the risk isn't as great as it was when we occupied the Rhineland.' Only France's reaction was unpredictable. After dozing for two hours, however, Goebbels awoke to the news that France's prime minister had resigned over unrelated domestic issues. That clinched it. 'Tally-ho,' he whooped. 'The imponderables are melting away.' Called over to the chancellery again that Thursday (the tenth) he found a hunched Führer, now brooding over maps.

They had two days before Schuschnigg's proposed referendum. Goebbels suggested this scenario: the two tame Austrian Nazis, Seyss-Inquart and Glaise-Horstenau, should stipulate that the referendum be based on the 1935 Saar referendum statute. Schuschnigg would of course refuse. The two Nazis would resign on Friday. On Saturday the Luftwaffe would send six to eight hundred planes to drop leaflets calling on the Austrian people to arise. 'The people do so. And on Sunday we march in.' S.A. Obergruppenführer Hermann Reschny, who had four thousand embittered Austrian 'legionnaires' (exiled Nazis) standing by, predicted that Schuschnigg's troops would open fire. But now there was no stopping Hitler. 'There has always been something about March,' mused Goebbels, setting his printing presses rolling. 'It has been the Führer's lucky month so far.'

At midnight Hitler sent for him again. He was speeding things up. The Wehrmacht would invade Austria on Saturday, not Sunday, and push straight through to Vienna. He himself would follow. 'In eight days'—this was Goebbels' sober estimate, with all the bloodshed that it implied—'Austria will be ours.'

The few remaining hours saw him at his best. At his desk until four A.M., he dictated leaflets, placards, and circulars and arranged with Heydrich for a police guard on the printing works—nobody was to be allowed out until the tanks began to move.⁸³ Once, Magda came briefly with the children to see their absentee father. At eight A.M. on Friday Hitler reviewed the leaflets. As the hours ticked away, Hitler, Göring, and Goebbels put their heads together, hatching plans on how to effect the actual Anschluss, political union with Austria. 'The Führer must be popularly elected as [Austria's] federal president as well,' was Goebbels' idea, 'and thereafter bring about the Anschluss little by little.' To legalize the invasion Seyss-Inquart would have to send a telegram from Vienna appealing for Wehrmacht troops. Hitler, Goebbels, and Göring dictated a suitable text. 'It arrives here soon after,' wrote Goebbels, somewhat prematurely, 'and thus we have the legitimation we need.'⁸⁴

The German troops rolled into Austria on Saturday March 12. Leaving Göring and Goebbels in Berlin, Hitler set off to follow them. Not a shot was fired.

The Austrians' overwhelming reception of the 'invaders' stunned even

1938

Goebbels. Tears streaming down his cheeks he sat up until three A listening to the radio broadcasts of the emotional scenes. Again and ag Horst Wessel's hymn blared forth. Hitler and the rump Austrian Cabi decided on Anschluss forthwith, which settled that problem. Thereaf things moved at breakneck speed. The Jewish-controlled newspapers Vienna were banned—the Jews themselves were already routed, sta peding toward those few frontiers that still opened for them ('Where to?' commented Goebbels maliciously. 'As Wandering Jews in t Nothingness').⁸⁵ Together with Lida Baarova and her bosom friend Hil Körber, Goebbels sat glued to the radio in Veit Harlan's house on 1 afternoon of March 14 listening to the excited commentary as Hit entered Vienna.⁸⁶ The forlorn British and French protests tailed aw blotted out by the totally unexpected sounds of jubilation from Austr:

To consolidate his masterstroke, Hitler called a joint Austrian-Germ referendum for April 10. Goebbels established a Reich Propaganda A (agency) in Vienna, shipped fifty thousand cheap Volks radios there facilitate the referendum campaign, and prepared an epic reception f Hitler's return to Berlin. This was not easy because, at Berndt's request he had deputized for Goebbels in Austria—the propaganda minister h just sacrificed Berlin's entire stock of flags and banners for Hitler's ent to Vienna.⁸⁷ But when the Führer landed back in Berlin at five P.M. the sixteenth Goebbels outdid himself. He and Göring sat proudly in t Führer's open car as it slowly drove through the cheering millions to t chancellery.⁸⁸

The speed of events was now almost frightening. Unrolling map Hitler discussed with Goebbels and chief engineer Fritz Todt the ne autobahns for Austria, and the rebuilding of his native Linz.⁸⁹ 'Astoun ing, the fresh plans he is already hatching,' wrote Goebbels—and it clear that it was not just bricks and concrete that both men had in mind

FOR a few days, after Warsaw had issued a short-fused ultimatum Lithuania over disputed territories, Hitler stood by to claw back Memel: it is now Klaipeda—a little strip of once-German territory annexed yea before by Lithuania.⁹¹ Nothing came of it, and the next major victim w to be Czechoslovakia.

Goebbels had long known that this was so.⁹² After the chief of ti Czech general staff had boasted of how their fortifications would allc time for their allies to act, Goebbels pityingly commented: 'Poor fool! Several times he delivered to Prague's envoy in Berlin, Dr Vojtech Mastn lofty homilies on the follies of allowing German émigrés to slander Hiti from the false sanctuary of Prague.⁹⁴ He knew all Hitler's plans. C March 19 the Führer invited him upstairs to his little study in the Reic chancellery, laid out a map of central Europe, and plotted their ne moves, each man egging the other on. Germany would tackle Czecholovakia next, Hitler confirmed. 'We'll share that with the Poles ar Hungarians,' recorded Goebbels afterwards: 'And without further ad (We are a boa constrictor, still digesting,' he added, as though apologizir

1938

to the diary for the necessary delay.) Then, the two men agreed, Germany would strike north-east into the Baltic countries, and west into Alsace and Lorraine. 'Just let France wallow deeper and deeper into her crisis,' he wrote. 'Let there be no false sentimentality.' How he admired Hitler. 'How stirring it is when he says his one desire is to live to see with his own eyes this great German, Teutonic Reich.'⁹⁵

Hearing that Göring, now a field marshal, had incautiously reassured Mastný about the sanctity of Czechoslovakia's frontier, Goebbels was distraught. 'Guaranteeing their frontiers! That's right out of line.'⁹⁶ A few days later, on March 24, Hitler repeated his innermost intentions to Goebbels and his new foreign minister Ribbentrop. 'The Führer declares,' recorded Goebbels, 'that he wants to adjust our frontier with France one day, but not that with Italy. He particularly does *not* want to reach the Adriatic. Our ocean lies to the north and east. A country cannot throw its weight in two directions at once. If it does, it will split in two.'⁹⁷

His diary reveals the cynical instructions which Hitler now issued to the Sudeten German leader Konrad Henlein: 'Keep demanding more than Prague can deliver. That will set the ball rolling.'⁹⁸

Thus the time-bomb began to tick beneath the Czechs. 'They haven't the foggiest notion of whom the bell is tolling for,' Goebbels chortled. And he repeated: 'Poor fools!'⁹⁹

HE had printed seven trainloads of propaganda material to persuade the voters, and his well-tempered election machinery began to hum. Only the actual ballot form proposed by Frick upset him. 'People can vote either Yes or No at will,' he observed. 'We didn't have that the last time'—in March 1936.¹⁰⁰ Hitler promised to look into it, but the final ballot still had space for a No vote.

Late in March 1938 the two men opened their separate campaigns, speaking in dozens of cities until their throats were sore and their vocal chords ached, and phoning each other each night to bandy details of their rhetorical triumphs. Goebbels spoke in Hanover, Dresden, and Vienna. 'To those who ask, "Why another plebiscite?"', he roared in Vienna's Nordwestbahnhof, decorated with huge swastika banners, 'we reply that we must put the world face to face with such an overwhelming vote as to close its mouth.'¹⁰¹ At Breslau, to ensure a capacity audience, his ministry announced that his speech would not be broadcast (but it was).¹⁰²

Soon the first results began to come in—Germans overseas casting their votes aboard German passenger liners in harbor gave Hitler ninety-nine percent backing.¹⁰³ The main ballot was to be on April 10, 1938. On the morning before that—proclaimed by Goebbels as the Day of the Grossdeutsches Reich—he took Hitler to Vienna's city hall for another brilliantly stage-managed pageant. As twenty thousand carrier pigeons fluttered up into the biting cold skies, as sirens wailed, and as the Luftwaffe's squadrons thundered over the rooftops, Hitler stepped out onto the balcony.¹⁰⁴ Vienna went wild. After supper, the crowds began

1938

to chant—no doubt wholly spontaneously—‘Dearest Führer, please don’t you / bring our Doctor out there too!’ Not doubting the outcome of the vote, Hitler told Goebbels he was planning to put Schuschnigg on trial. He would of course commute any death sentence that resulted (‘Pity,’ observed Goebbels. ‘What has to be, has to be!’)¹⁰⁵ The next morning, as their train back to Berlin passed through Leipzig, Hitler¹⁰⁶ mused out loud about the Jewish problem. He planned, he said, to send them all off to, say, Madagascar—the first recorded reference by him to this scheme. Madagascar of course was French, but an hour later he reiterated that one day he was going to settle France’s hash too. ‘His life and burning ambition,’ realized Goebbels.¹⁰⁶

They arrived back in Berlin at one-thirty P.M. It was now election day and Magda was waiting. The cameras whirled as their children handed out bouquets of flowers to Hitler, and they cast their own votes at a booth in the station concourse.

The voting results revealed a unanimity of almost embarrassing proportions for the new Grossdeutsches Reich. In Austria 99.75 percent of all voters had cast their ballots for Hitler; in Germany, 99.08 percent (Saxony had let them down). From Paris, London, and Prague a shocked silence greeted this extraordinary display of democracy running amok.

‘Germany,’ commented Goebbels, ‘has conquered an entire nation with the ballot paper.’¹⁰⁸

29: The Gambler

THAT Anschluss vote was the crowning achievement of his first five years as minister, but already he was preoccupied with other things. On March 18 Hitler signed a decree setting up a new film academy, which would offer courses on film history, propaganda, and audience-analysis—a subject close to his heart.¹

He was also preparing his onslaught on Junk Art (*entartete Kunst*). In June 1937 he had been shown some sorry examples of what at that time he called 'artistic bolshevism,' and he had begun planning a mocking exhibition. At first the mortified and effete world of art connoisseurs had given him little encouragement.² Speer had offered to help him stage the exhibition but later even he balked and changed his mind.³ On June 29 Hitler authorized Goebbels to confiscate all such works in all museums to stage an exhibition. Goebbels immediately instructed Professor Adolf Ziegler, a radical professor of art in Munich, to 'select and secure all works of German decadent art and sculpture since 1910 in German Reich, provincial, or municipal possession' for the purposes of the exhibition.⁴ It opened in Munich in July 1937. 'The "Junk Art" exhibition is a gigantic success,' recorded Goebbels on the twenty-fourth, 'and a deadly blow. The Führer stands fast at my side against all enmities.' Hess, Rosenberg, Speer, and other Nazis all had favorite artists they tried to protect, but Goebbels was merciless; the next day he phoned Ziegler to purge all the museums—'It will take three months, then we're clean.'⁵ The concentrated effect of so much that was grotesque and avant-garde was stunning. Although only six of the 112 exhibits were by Jews, Hitler pinned the blame on them in his introduction to the catalogue: 'Jewry has been able,' he wrote, 'largely by exploiting its position in the press, to obscure all normal ideas of the nature and function of art.' Using methods well proven in the years of struggle, Goebbels hired actors to circulate among the crowds feigning disgust at the works on display.

Professor Ziegler told Goebbels that the Weimar government had forked out six million Gold marks to purchase this Junk Art.⁶ With Hitler's approval, and over the objections of Rust and Rosenberg, Goebbels drafted a law formally confiscating all of such works without compensation.⁷ The Reich sold them off to less discerning nations and used the foreign currency to buy in real Old Masters.⁸ Seen eventually by three million people, the junk art exhibition would visit thirteen cities in Germany and Austria, exhibiting works by Otto Dix, Emil Nolde, and

May 2, 1938

Oskar Kokoschka. A typical item was Kirchner's Self-Portrait as a Soldier showing him holding up a bloodied stump instead of a hand ('an ins to German heroes,' read the exhibition's tag). Georg Grosz's similar indictments of war were branded a deliberate sabotage of national defense.

THE glorious reunification of Germany and Austria has mellowed Goebbels and his platinum blonde wife. Foreign diplomats often speculate his replacement, and rumors about his personal life abound.⁹ But oft it is just like old times for them. He spends several Sundays out Schwanenwerder with her. For a few days she has to go to the clinic her heart is playing up again as the final weeks of this, her seventh pregnancy, begin to tell on her. 'I soon comfort her,' he records.¹⁰ Perhaps this is the occasion when he confesses that he does not find it easy remain faithful, except now because Magda is pregnant.¹¹ Magda blissfully repeats these lines to her venomous sister-in-law Ello and adds starry-eyed, 'Joseph and I are now just as close to one another as ever.' seem

He is probably telling the truth. Lida Baarova is being difficult. He visits Lanke twice alone in April; he plays the piano, sleeps, wall indulges in some pistol practice, then repeats in his diary, 'I am all alone here.'¹² On May 2 he leaves Magda to accompany Hitler on his state visit to Italy. 'I give her a gold medallion bearing my likeness,' he records 'The dear thing cries at our parting.'¹³

As they waited for their limousines at the chancellery Hitler told him that he hoped to conclude a firm alliance with Mussolini which would keep him out of the anti-German front that London and Paris were cooking up.¹⁴

There is little point in dwelling on their week-long visit to Italy Goebbels' newly discovered diary confirms anew the Nazis' contempt for monarchies. All were grimly agreed: 'Never again a monarchy!'¹⁵ The king of Italy treated Hitler's ministers like shoeshine boys, in Goebbels words. 'This entire pack of royal toadies: Shoot the lot! They make you sick. They treat us as parvenus! ... Here's a tiny clique of princes who seem to think Europe belongs to them.'¹⁶ As for the Italian people Goebbels observed that they seemed easily enthused. 'But only the future can show whether they will stand fast when push comes to shove.'¹⁷

Mussolini's study, Goebbels afterward found, was oppressively large furnished with just one monolithic desk and a globe. In two long secret meetings with the Italian dictator on May 4, Hitler told him in confidence of his plans in the east.¹⁸ So far, so good, he indicated to Goebbels late that day: he had thanked the Duce for helping him get Austria, and promised to repay the favor. 'Over Czechoslovakia,' noted Goebbels: 'Mussolini has given us a totally free hand.' (Hitler had hinted in a secret letter to the Duce just before the Anschluss that he was going to deal with the Czechs next.) The final outcome was, as Goebbels put it,

May 20, 1938

military alliance of sorts—though not one on paper as Hitler would have hoped.¹⁹

The Führer rewarded Mussolini immediately. At their final banquet he ceremonially guaranteed their existing frontier, thus writing off the South Tyrol for ever. 'But it is correct,' conceded Goebbels lamely, as their train headed back north through Italy. 'And things won't work out otherwise.'²⁰ Through the train windows Goebbels fancied he could see clusters of weeping South Tyroleans whom his Führer had just betrayed.²¹ In Florence Mussolini took his leave of Hitler with the words: 'There is no power on earth that can drive us apart.'²²

WHILE on board the Italian flagship Conte Cavour Hitler has handed a signal form to Goebbels. Magda has given birth to another girl at two P.M. that day, May 5. 'Since today is our Navy Day,' Mussolini pompously suggested, 'You might name her "Marina".' Goebbels merely grins. He will decide at first to call the infant Hertha, but shortly opts for Hedda instead—Magda's mother has just seen a fine performance of *Hedda Gabler*.²³

A week passes before he is back in Berlin and sets eyes on his fourth daughter. Magda has had a difficult confinement. 'What women go through for children!' he sympathizes in his diary, and drives straight out to spend the next two nights at Lanke.²⁴ Perhaps her delivery has released him from his self-imposed constraints. Whatever; at his lakeside villa he plays music, reads, and relaxes, then lazes, reads some more, takes out the motor launch, basks in the sun, and enjoys 'some music and parlover,' so he is evidently not alone. By thought association his next diary entry mentions his spouse—'Magda is okay.'²⁵

The next five weeks probably destroy any illusions that Magda may have cherished. True, Goebbels writes about making plans with her for the future, but it is not certain that that future actually *includes* her.²⁶ There are bitter rows between them. Over the next five weeks he registers eleven 'parlavers' with her²⁷—and unequal bouts they must have been, conducted between Goebbels with all his rhetorical skills and his less sophisticated wife, with her Belgian convent accent still clinging thickly to her vowels and consonants. Probably Lida Baarova is the cause, because he has been out to Lanke again twice in mid-May before fetching mother and baby Hedda home from the maternity clinic on the seventeenth—and he goes out there again on May 20. His infatuation with Lida is now at its zenith. He spends so many hours on the phone to her that 'Göring's wiretappers have to assign extra staff to monitoring her line (because she is a Czech and thus a potential enemy alien).'²⁸ The Gestapo is also involved. He meets Lida at Hilde Körber's villa in Grunewald, No. 1a Lassen Strasse; but she too is a Czech, and her nine-year-old son Thomas will remember Goebbels sending him to keep a look-out for Gestapo cars from the window.²⁹ Eventually Hitler mentions this to Goebbels and suggests he break off the affair—but it is only this security aspect that bothers him.³⁰

scene

D. T. on
Italian
emotion.
It cannot
bear to fail
to rise
to the
moment.
Even
Mussolini
is not
immune to
this.

May 20, 1938

250 III: THE REICH MINISTER

On the day after Goebbels once more visits Lanke in mid-June, 1938, Magda, and his sister all 'talk things over' in a little pub in Berlin's West End.³¹ Only twice in all those weeks does he escort Magda to pub functions, in Charlottenburg (the diary logs another row that night), and Vienna: On their way back from Vienna, he sets her down in Dresden where she is to take a cure lasting several weeks at her regular clinic. 'A heartfelt farewell,' writes Goebbels, and drives straight out to Lanke again.³² That summer one of the two swans on their little lake died. 'It's an omen,' says Lida. 'It's all over.'³³

Magda puts up with all this only for so long. Once in his absence she spends an evening with Hitler and hints at these problems. Embarrassed the Führer refuses to listen. Magda sniffs afterward to Ello, 'Once corporal, always a corporal!'³⁴

While Magda is away in Dresden, Goebbels resolves to choose once and for all between her and Lida. It is not an easy choice. He spends a week that July out at Lanke, evidently alone. He decides not to allow anybody to visit.³⁵ Once after strolling through the rain-soak woods he writes the exclamation 'Melancholy!' in his diary.³⁶ Visiting Schwanenwerder and the children, he takes girls out for boat trips couple of times, but unforecast stormclouds are threatening his love life. He is sleeping badly, his head in a whirl. On July 8, 1938, his diary suddenly erupts without warning: 'I've got such worries. They're fit to burst my heart.'³⁸

Goebbels invites Karl Hanke to talk sense into her. Hanke, over twenty years her junior, pampers Magda and teaches her how to ride; she blossoms in his company. But by no means is he blindly loyal to his minister. For Hanke, it is *Tristan and Isolde*. He sees Magda as a dreadfully wronged woman. A man of unquestionable courage, he becomes her knight in shining armor. Sexually there is probably nothing between them—she is far above this engine-driver's son in social station.³⁹ But she instinctively sees that with his unrestricted access to her husband's private mail Hanke may become a useful ally. He promises to keep his eyes open. Goebbels' problems are only just beginning.

He often spoke with Hitler about the future. Seeking ways to thwart any restoration of the monarchy, Hitler had hinted in Cabinet early in 1933 at the creation of a constitutional senate to elect his successor when the time came.⁴⁰ Germany must remain a Führer state, he told Goebbels after their visit to Italy.⁴¹ 'The Senate,' predicted Goebbels in June 1933 'will soon be nominated and convened. It will be incumbent on it to elect each Führer.' Three hours after that the S.A., S.S., and armed forces would swear allegiance to him.⁴² (No such elective senate was ever appointed however, as the turbulent events of that summer eventually led directly to war.)

Many of Goebbels' measures were already predicated on a coming war.⁴³ Meeting his new military liaison officer, Bruno Wentscher, on the last day of July he drew heavily on quotations from Hitler's *Mein Kampf*

June

1938

to back his views. 'We soon see eye to eye,' he wrote.⁴⁴ Beginning with Breslau, Goebbels erected thousands of loudspeakers in city streets so that he could address the multitudes at the flick of a switch. There was to be no escape from his relentless propaganda. He ordered German radio to extend its broadcasting hours until three A.M. to discourage Hitler's subjects from listening to foreign stations—a prospect that would soon become almost an obsession in Goebbels. Meanwhile he labored to increase movie receipts. Although he had not been able to prevent some resounding flops like Karl Ritter's *Capriccio*—Hitler called it 'premium-grade crap,' and Goebbels found it 'trivial, boring, frivolous, and devoid of style'⁴⁵—there were some box-office hits like *The Holm Murder Case*, filmed with police assistance, and Riefenstahl's now complete two-part film of the Olympics, a stunning work of cinematic art which premiered on Hitler's birthday in Berlin.⁴⁶ He proudly appeared at that premiere with Lida Baarova, not Magda, at his side.⁴⁷

Benevolent and brutal alike, Goebbels was adopting the airs of a Renaissance patron. He paid Riefenstahl a one-hundred-thousand-mark bonus from his secret funds.⁴⁸ He pruned the excessive salaries paid to some filmstars and doubled or even trebled others.⁴⁹ The world of music too trembled at his whim. Should the singing of Schubert's or Schumann's lieder be allowed at Viennese music festivals (the words were by Jews)? Goebbels decided that they should.⁵⁰ After hearing Richard Strauss conduct in Düsseldorf, he nodded to the great composer, as a hint that he was *persona grata* again ('He has now done penance enough').⁵¹ In August 1938 an author annoyed him: Goebbels had him incarcerated in a concentration camp, and brought back in a month later. 'A final warning! . . . One more transgression and he's for the high jump. Now we both know that.'⁵²

OTHER capitals followed Berlin's example in evicting the Jews from cultural life. Rome fired Jews from teaching posts. Warsaw enacted anti-Jewish nationality laws. In Bucharest the short-lived prime minister Octavian Goga forbade Jews to hire young female domestic staff.⁵³ 'The Jews,' applauded Goebbels, 'are fleeing in every direction. But nobody wants to let them in. Where to dump this scum?' He felt that he had the people behind him in hounding the Jews. 'You've got to knock out a few front teeth,' he reasoned, 'then talk.'⁵⁴ He had squelched earlier plans by Streicher to plaster Jewish businesses with garish placards naming people caught shopping there.⁵⁵ But he ordered that Jews be excluded from bidding for public works contracts in March 1938.⁵⁶ And talking with Hitler he argued that the Jews and the ethnic Czechs should be squeezed out of Vienna—'That way we shall be solving the housing shortage too.'⁵⁷ That a wave of suicides swept through the despairing Viennese Jews left him unmoved. 'It used to be the Germans killing themselves,' he recorded. 'Now the boot's on the other foot.'⁵⁸

Inspired by Vienna's example, he planned with Count von Helldorff, Berlin's police chief, a concerted effort to evict the Jews from the city.

June, 1938

252 III: THE REICH MINISTER

They outlined to Hitler in April various ways of harassing them, including restricting them to designated swimming pools, cinemas, and eating places, and identifying Jewish shops and businesses as such.⁵⁹ 'We'll put an end to Berlin's image as a happy hunting ground for Jews,' Goebbels privately swore. 'Madagascar would be the best place for them.' Hitler, who was less keen, asked them to wait until after his state visit to Italy in May. Helldorff arrested the first three hundred Jews on a pretext early in June; but then he went on leave and to Goebbels' dismay his legal staff released them all, apart from a handful with known criminal records. (Helldorff's antisemitism was only skin-deep; a few weeks later Heydrich learned to his disgust that Helldorff had a Jewish dentist.)⁶¹ Recalling the count from leave, Goebbels explained that the object was to hound the Jews out of Berlin.⁶² He also spoke directly to audiences of police officers expounding this policy. Hitler meanwhile had left Berlin to summer in Bavaria.

To coordinate the persecution with Goebbels' gau HQ, on June 1 Helldorff set up a special Jewish section (Dezernat).⁶³ Over the next few days, in a copybook harassment operation, the Berlin police rounded up 1,122 criminal, 445 'anti-social', and seventy-seven foreign Jews four without proper papers; sixty-six were imprisoned, 1,029 were thrown into concentration camps, the rest detained for days in police cells. Helldorff imposed steep fines on those found to have been disregarding Nazi price-fixing laws. Meanwhile his police seized 250 Jewish-owned automobiles pending safety tests; he also demanded that Jews give up their adopted German names, particularly those that implied aristocratic birth.⁶⁴ There were inevitably distressing scenes, some photographed by British newspapermen; Goebbels had their films confiscated.⁶⁵ Meanwhile Nazi hooligans placarded shops wherever their owners were Jewish. As the uglier side of human nature came to the fore, even Helldorff asked Goebbels to call a halt, saying that 'unsavory elements' were getting out of hand, under the party's mantle.

It seems that Goebbels had under-estimated the gusto with which the Berlin lumpenproletariat would wade into the city's Jews if given half a chance. Belatedly he tried to apply the brakes.⁶⁶ In the light of later events his diary entry of June 22, 1938 deserves quoting:

The Jewish problem in Berlin has now got complicated. Probably Helldorff's instigation the party smeared graffiti all over the Jewish shops. . . . There has been some looting too. Gypsies and other underworld elements have moved in on it. I have had them all thrown into concentration camps. Helldorff did precisely the reverse of what I ordered: I had said that the police were to act within the law, with the party just standing by as onlookers. The opposite happened. I summoned all the party authorities and issued new orders. There are to be no illegal acts.

'Anyway,' he reflected, 'this type of rough justice does have its blessing. The Jews have been given one hell of a fright and they'll probably think

June, 1938

twice now before regarding Berlin as their Eldorado.⁶⁷

Göring was pained by the antisemitic excesses of June 1938, but Goebbels was unrepentant: 'The fight against the Jews goes on, with legal means, right to the last rung of the gallows.'⁶⁸ Although his handwritten diary and Helldorff's report leave no doubt that he had personally instigated the anti-Jewish drive of June 1938, he added a highly deceitful entry reading: 'Operation Jew has now died down. A police major and a Kreisleiter were to blame. . . . I take firm action to prevent a recurrence.'⁶⁹ He also righteously directed Helldorff to investigate reports that Jews were being manhandled at Sachsenhausen concentration camp.⁷⁰

Discomfited by the unfavorable foreign press reactions, Ribbentrop buttonholed him at the Kaiserhof hotel. Goebbels promised to tread more softly.⁷¹ A few days later, at Bayreuth, he carefully recorded that the Führer 'endorsed' (*billigt*) his Berlin operation. 'It is immaterial what the foreign press writes,' added Goebbels. 'The main thing is to squeeze out the Jews. Ten years from now they must all have been removed from Germany. But for the time being we intend to keep the Jews here—as pawns.'⁷²

DURING March 1938 Hitler had laid plans to seize the whole of Czechoslovakia, using the problems of the German minority as a pretext. He had directed the Sudeten German leader Henlein to state impossible demands. In April Henlein had warned Goebbels about the strength of the Czech fortifications.⁷³ Hitler told Goebbels to invite twenty thousand Sudeten Germans to the Breslau gymnastics display that summer.⁷⁴ On May 2, Goebbels had directed his newspapers to start the propaganda campaign, pouring oil on the already flickering flames.⁷⁵ Ribbentrop, alarmed, complained to both Hitler and Goebbels, but neither cared. 'Ribbentrop's a typical groveler,' scoffed Goebbels, enjoying every moment of his newfound strategic importance.⁷⁶ The first blood flowed as Czech gendarmes shot dead two Sudeten Germans on May 21 near Eger. In the ensuing uproar, Prague mobilized troops, while London and Paris taunted Hitler for inactivity: He bided his time down at the Berghof. Then, claiming the Führer's backing, Goebbels let the full press campaign rip, noting triumphantly: 'Ribbentrop is on the verge of tears.'⁷⁷ But the foreign minister immediately persuaded Hitler that their press must pull back, leaving an outraged Goebbels with more than a slight feeling of nausea. Hitler well knew that his Wehrmacht would not be ready to attack Czechoslovakia until October.

Goebbels was among those at lunch with Hitler in Berlin on May 27. He noted merely that Hitler had returned for military consultations.⁷⁸ He did not mince his words about Ribbentrop. 'Either we publish no more news at all on border violations,' he recorded, claiming once more that Hitler backed him, 'or we take countermeasures.' He saw Hitler pacing up and down and pondering. ('We have to leave him alone. He is brooding on a decision. That often takes some time.')⁷⁹ The next day Hitler announced to his generals and ministers that it was his 'unshakable

July 8, 1938

254 III: THE REICH MINISTER

intention' to smash Czechoslovakia.⁸⁰ Less tense now that he had made up his mind, over lunch on the last day of May 1938 Hitler gave Goebbels a thumbnail sketch of the Czechs, calling them 'impertinent, mendacious, devout, and servile.'

'Spot on!' agreed Goebbels.⁸¹

Hitler said they should give Prague no respite at all that summer. Goebbels went further, pouring more oil on the flames, although the public soon tired.⁸² A clammy feeling spread that war was inevitable. Even Goebbels was not immune to this apprehension, writing one day 'We shall have to be on guard, otherwise we'll slither into a catastrophe one which nobody wants but which comes along all the same.' When the embassy in London reported that the British did intend to put up a fight, Goebbels recorded further misgivings.⁸⁴ Other ministers began to share their fears with him. 'The Führer,' he however concluded, brightened, 'knows what he wants. So far he has always hit upon the right moment to act.'⁸⁵

WHILE Germany edges toward war during the summer of 1938, Goebbels' personal life also teeters on the brink. Magda, thirty-six, has left June 20, blubbering, for her regular clinic in Dresden. Karl Hanke is in love with her. And Goebbels is thinking of leaving her for a Czech film actress of twenty-three, Lida Baarova.

Unaware of the rumors Hitler insists that both Goebbels attend the opening of the new Künstlerhaus (House of Artists) in Munich on July 8, a glittering social occasion with five hundred guests in medals and evening dress. Goebbels' diary is non-committal: 'Magda accompanied me for the first time in quite a while. The Führer is very nice to both of us. . . . Magda is radiant.'⁸⁶ Over the next two days they attend two more functions together.⁸⁷ From what Magda tells Speer, however, her husband has been badgering her incessantly since collecting her from Dresden. 'He is using the children to blackmail me,' she says. 'He is threatening to take them away from me.'⁸⁸ Dr Goebbels returns his wife to the Dresden clinic on the way back to Berlin.

Two more weeks of this conspicuous separation follow. He often visits the children at Schwanenwerder and sometimes sleeps there. He previews two new films in his private cinema there including Lida's latest, *The Gambler*. He records in his diary a kind of even-handed alibi: 'One barely knows which of the two films to favor.' Playing safe, he enters both titles in the Venice film festival.⁸⁹

Scarcely has Magda returned when he leaves for Heidelberg and Austria. Once, she yammers at him on the telephone.⁹⁰ As the gorgeous annual Wagner festival begins, Hitler again commands them to appear together at Bayreuth. Dr Goebbels flies down separately on July 24. For his love-smitten aide Hanke it is pure torment to see Magda sharing her bedroom with Goebbels in the new wing of the Wagner household. For all choices, that evening's offering is *Tristan und Isolde*. Wagner's romantic opera relates the ecstasy of a love which can face even death. Drama

July 24, 1938

though the libretto is, neither Hitler nor Goebbels will forget the tragic scenes that accompany it in the auditorium. The Führer and his lady, the voluminous and matronly Winifred Wagner, sit in the large central box flanked by Joseph and a loudly sobbing Magda; Albert Speer, summoned to Bayreuth by his distraught friend Hanke, is to Magda's left. During the intermission she slumps with head bowed, loudly weeping, in the salon while Hitler and his white-faced propaganda minister affect not to notice. In his diary Goebbels comments stiffly only on the Wagner—'What music, and what acoustics! Incomparable!'—and passes over in silence the no less memorable performance of his spouse.⁹¹

scene

The diary does hint at a row the next day. 'We find ourselves again,' he records however, blandly adding: 'We have been apart so long.'⁹² They lunch and dine again with Hitler, Winifred Wagner, and Speer. Hanke, excluded from these occasions, is frantic. By Speer's account, he has enlightened Hitler that morning about what is going on. The Führer sends for Goebbels—the diary shows them talking until three A.M.—and bluntly suggests that he leave Bayreuth forthwith.

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Speer
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It is an appalling turning point in the two men's relations. After only three hours' sleep, Dr Goebbels flies back to Berlin with his tail between his legs, leaving Magda and Hanke in Bayreuth.⁹³ 'She is so nice and affectionate to me,' he tells his disbelieving diary. The next day she goes—no doubt not alone—to see *Tristan* again. 'That would be too much for me,' observes Goebbels dourly, and drives out to Lanke.⁹⁴

scene
?

While Magda stays on at Bayreuth, he orders a second preview of *The Gambler* at Schwanenwerder, probably for Lida's benefit, and luxuriates in unopposed access to the children.⁹⁵ Little Holde, now seventeen months, has come toddling across the tarmac at Tempelhof to greet him. Helga, nearly six, is graceful and ladylike. Hilde is a little moppet, and Hellmut, alas, a stubborn little ne'er-do-well.⁹⁶

One possibility is that Hitler tells him to go so that Mr. A. H. can talk to Magda. Cite her her instructions also. Her weakness excites him.

Their father conveys all this to his diary, but its pages are becoming increasingly a vehicle for deception. 'A long discussion with Magda,' it records. 'She is very sweet and kind to me. I do love her very much. It's so good to own a person who belongs to one body and soul.'⁹⁷ The next day he gives her a beautiful amethyst ring. Later he phones Lida Baarova, calling himself Müller as usual, and announces: 'Liduschka, I have told my wife everything. She knows that I love you and cannot live without you.'⁹⁸

On the day after that, August 4, he phones again to say that Magda wants to talk things over with her. 'She's being very sensible about it. . . . It will be all right.'⁹⁹ Panicking and feeling suddenly trapped, Lida drives over from the studios to Schwanenwerder after the day's filming. Magda receives her swaying gently on her feet, with more than one tot of cognac inside her, and challenges her to reveal her intentions. Lida blurts out, however, 'I want to leave Germany!' She pleads with Magda for help.

'No,' responds Magda tipsily, 'you must not leave! He needs us both. He is a genius. It is our duty to live for him.' Filling Lida's glass, and addressing her as *du*, she lays down a few ground rules. 'I don't want any carrying-on in here,' she says motioning unsteadily around her villa. The

Aug 4, 1938

256 III: THE REICH MINISTER

two lovebirds can live in the house next door, the citadel. 'What happens elsewhere doesn't bother me.' Nor, she adds as an afterthought, ~~must~~ Lida have any children by Goebbels.

Young Lida is stunned by all this. 'I'm too young,' she protests in indignation momentarily displacing tact. 'I have all my life ahead of me.' She is conscious that, as a Czech, her career is at the minister's mercy; he can order her deportation instantly. Often she has driven home from Lanke in floods of tears, rendered distraught by the hopelessness of her position.¹⁰⁰

Dr Goebbels walks in, eyes gleaming. He bestows upon Lida a diamond brooch. 'Are we all set?' he asks.

In his diary he records only 'an important talk,' adding: 'It is of great importance to me. I am glad we're all set now.'¹⁰¹ It makes no mention of Lida at all. It paints an idyllic picture of the next days, as the minister cruises with unidentified friends—six times in one week—on the sun-dappled waters of the Wannsee.¹⁰² While the temperature in Berlin climbs, they chat, they laze in the sun, they visit Peacock Island for picnics, as they swim around in the lake's warm waters. Once Magda comes splashing alongside Lida and asks, 'Are you happy now?' Lida swims gracefully away from her. But things are already coming unstuck. Goebbels loses another long spat with Magda. 'Things are not entirely clarified...' Lida grimly records. 'The last months have pretty well worn me down.'¹⁰³ Tensions increase.¹⁰⁴ On one trip he and a scantily clad Lida have adjacent deck chairs on the foredeck overlooked by Magda from aloft. Ello Quan sees the tears behind Magda's dark glasses and Magda blurts out the unnatural arrangement which her husband is proposing.¹⁰⁵ That Saturday, the thirteenth, they all cruise to Lake Tegel in a violent summer rainstorm. After a visit to Peacock Island, Goebbels invites them back to watch a film. Most of them elect to see Anny Ondra's latest, but Goebbels, grinning, proposes *The Gambler* instead.¹⁰⁶ It is another little dig at Magda. When the lights come on, Lida turns round and sees Magda and Hanke holding hands in the back row.¹⁰⁷

As the rain beats down, Magda begins to fight back. That night she assigns Ello to share Lida's bedroom in the citadel, pleading a full house as an excuse.¹⁰⁸ The Czech actress snaps at Goebbels, 'I shan't be coming again. I don't like being spied on!' That Sunday, August 14, after consulting with the poisonous Ello, Magda tells her husband to get out—she's going to sue for divorce.

On Monday, a tropical heatwave returns. 'I'm glad to get away!' Lida grouches in his diary. Perspiring through his thin white suit, Goebbels drives back to Berlin. Now the heat is on in every sense. As Hitler returns to Berlin that evening, Hanke secures an immediate audience for Magda.¹⁰⁹ She complains that a young Czech actress has invaded her marriage. People at her studios, she says, have heard Lida boasting, 'It is I who shall decide when they divorce!'¹¹⁰ Hitler knows who Baarova is. He has just seen *The Gambler* (the only film this week on which he had passed no comment).¹¹¹ But he will not hear of divorce in the Reich.

Scenes

'happiest family.' He sends for Goebbels. The minister's stock is beginning a decline from which it will take six years to recover. 'I then have a very long and grave conversation with him,' records Goebbels, without being more specific. 'It shakes me to the core. I am deeply moved by it. The Führer is like a father to me. I am so grateful to him. I take grim decisions. But they are final.'¹¹² Goebbels is hoist by his own petard; trapped by the 'family image' that he has himself created.

He telephones Lida Baarova immediately afterward at her rented Grunewald villa. She will never forget his words. 'My wife is a devil!' he exclaims. 'She's just been over to the Führer and told him everything. She has persuaded him that you're the evil one. I've had to give my word of honor that I won't ever see you again.' 'I love you,' he croaks between sobs. 'I cannot live without you.' He phones her best friend, the actress Hilde Körber, to go over and console Lida. Afterward he drives off aimlessly into the summer evening, half enjoying the suffering he has to endure. Not since Anka Stalherm has he experienced such a delicious torment to his soul.

'I am living as though in a trance,' he writes the next day, analyzing his own emotions. 'Life is so cruel and harsh. . . . But one's duty must come first.' After a 'very long and very doleful' farewell phone call (to Lida), he soliloquizes: 'I remain firm, though my heart bids fair to burst. Now let my new life begin. Harsh and cruel, but subservient only to my duty. My youth is now over.'¹¹³

1938

30: Duty put on Hold

IT was to Goebbels that Hitler subsequently gave the credit for a bloodless victory over Czechoslovakia in 1938.¹ The propaganda ministry artfully developed the theme that Czechoslovakia was ~~Mexico's~~ ^{Mexico's} cow's aircraft carrier in the heart of Europe. Taubert's anti-Comintern unit published a book, *Europe Betrayed*, to hammer home this line.² Later Goebbels flooded the media with Czech atrocity stories concocted by Berndt with the aid of address books, maps, and telephone directories. The Nazi newspapers along the frontier with Czechoslovakia supplied further raw material.

This did lead to local difficulties. Konrad Henlein's press chief Fra Höller objected to one particular story about Czech attacks on Sudet Germans, pointing out that this was his own village, and it enjoyed particularly good ethnic relations.⁴ 'Tell me,' retorted Goebbels, grinning, 'how big is your village?' Höller told him. 'Right,' said Goebbels, grinning evilly. 'So three hundred people know we are lying. But the rest of the world still has to find out!'⁵

For Czechoslovakia the clock was already ticking. On the day Magda's lachrymose performance at Bayreuth late in July Hitler had predicted that he would have to use force. 'Prague won't come to terms,' Goebbels wrote afterward.⁶ But Hitler's fortifications against France, the West Wall, were still incomplete. This, wrote Goebbels, was why Hitler had just sent an adjutant to London for informal talks with the new foreign secretary Lord Halifax—he had to play for time.⁷ 'Of course,' continued, 'our Berlin generals are all shitting their pants again. . . . The Führer wants to avoid actual war. That's why he's preparing for it with everything we've got.'

War psychosis gradually permeated Europe's capitals, including Berlin. Addressing the gauleiters, Göring argued against panicking. Goebbels, listening in his capacity as gauleiter of Berlin, wondered uneasily whether the German people would stand for a long war. They would have to resort to rapid surprise tactics. He could see Hitler's mind constantly turning to Britain—how dearly he would like to be on good terms with her—as to the south-east. 'We don't want these peoples,' Hitler commented late in August, discussing Hungary, Romania, and Czechoslovakia. 'Just this land.'⁸

His family life momentarily a shambles, Goebbels throws himself in

Aug 14, 1938

his other tasks. For the four weeks until the Sudeten crisis peaks in mid-September he wallows in self-pity. He has barely eaten since that dreadful rainy Sunday, August 14. He lies awake, hollow-eyed, takes sedatives to sleep. 'If only the sun would not shine. If only the day were not so bright and radiant! I draw the curtains and try to work.'⁹ A second man-to-man talk with Hitler leaves him badly shaken. 'I cannot think of any way out, almost,' he writes, the casual *almost* being a clue that this dramatic baring of feelings is largely sham. Indeed, each such heartrending passage is followed by humdrum details of ministerial routine. Using Hilde Körber as a conduit he explains that his decision (not to see Lida any more) is 'unalterable.'¹⁰ That evening he has a long, unforgettable, totally humiliating talk with Magda. 'She is so hardhearted and cruel,' is all he writes. 'I have nobody to help me. Nor do I want anybody. One must drink the full draught from this bitter chalice. And shrink back cravenly before nothing. I am presently suffering the worst time of my life. With [Minister of Posts] Ohnesorge,' he continues, without even dipping his pen, 'I have discussed details of our share of the reduced radio license fee. . . .'¹¹

last scene of the sequence

What a feast a psychiatrist can dish up from such passages, written in Goebbels' refuge at Lanke as the wind sighs and the rainstorms spatter his lake. 'I go to bed early. . . . Loneliness!' He flees to his mother and bewails: 'Ello has behaved despicably. But what else was one to expect of her?'¹² His mother falls ill with worry. Back at the ministry on Thursday, Hilde Körber 'comes with more sob stuff'—the German *weint mir etwas vor* is just as deprecating in tone. He again visits the hardhearted and cruel Magda, and curses in his diary: 'I've never seen her like this before.' He swears that he has now stopped seeing Lida. They agree on a truce until the end of September. 'Much can happen until then,' he reflects miserably. 'Both for better and for worse. . . . Let time pass, the universal healer.'¹³

There are some awkward moments. During the important five-day state visit by Admiral Nicholas von Horthy, the Hungarian regent—another of Czechoslovakia's predatory neighbors—Hitler orders Joseph Goebbels and Magda to appear together at the state reception on the twenty-fourth and at the gala performance of *Lohengrin* the next night. The photos show her sitting stiffly at her wayward husband's side. 'If only I could drop into an everlasting sleep,' writes Goebbels, still drinking deeply from that chalice, 'and never wake again!' After the farewell banquet in Charlottenburg castle, Magda snarls at him. '*Das alte Lied*,' he records with a wounded sigh: the same old melody. He stays up late talking with his trusty Karl Hanke, then decides on a little midnight motor excursion after all.¹⁴

He prepares a trial separation from his family. After seeing them briefly at Schwanenwerder on August 27, he spends a crestfallen night out at Lanke, then drops into the Scala strip club with a few friends. He decides to spend two weeks away from Berlin. Magda's nerves are in tatters too. Before leaving Berlin he phones her but finds her more impossible now than ever.¹⁵ He wonders who is putting her up to this and resolves not to

phone her again until many more weeks have passed.¹⁶

THE WAR clouds now conjured up by Hitler over Europe were thus almost a welcome diversion. Several times the diary shows him debating privately with his senior staff whether there would be war—'the one big to now.'¹⁷ Through a British mediator Prague had offered conciliatory terms to the Sudeten Germans, but this only embarrassed Hitler. 'The problem now,' observed Goebbels, 'is how the Führer can create a suitable situation to strike.'

Much depended on whether Britain would then declare war. Goebbels man in London, the fainthearted Fitz Randolph, lamely telegraphed that nobody could tell.¹⁸ Goebbels' gut feeling was that Britain was merely bluffing. He ordered that her threats should not be reflected in the ministry's monitoring reports, the so-called 'Blue Telegrams,' lest they frighten Ribbentrop's diplomats. He studied Britain's nerve-war tactics with all the analytical detachment of a master propagandist. 'The whole London scenario is well thought-out,' he wrote approvingly. 'Cabinet meetings, Henderson recalled to London, "prepared for grave steps and so forth. The old one-two. But it doesn't wash with us any more.'

On the last day of August he flew down to the Berghof with K. Hanke, evidently on his own initiative.²⁰ While waiting to see his Führer he was briefed by Göring's aide Karl Bodenschütz on the progress being made with the fortifications; the best month to attack Czechoslovakia, said the colonel, would be October. Otto Dietrich pulled a face and asked, 'What will Britain do?' Hitler, joining them, was reassuring. He delivered a little lecture about Bismarck's courage when it came to taking action. Goebbels afterward trudged downhill to the guesthouse—it did not escape him that Hitler no longer housed him in the Berghof itself. He was frantic about this mark of his slipping prestige, but he sensed the clammy fear of war that was spreading across all Germany.²¹ Using Helga's sixth birthday as a pretext he put through a call to Magda. She was as hardhearted as ever.²²

The next day Hitler told them that the gap in Germany's western defenses was now all but closed. 'Britain will hold back,' he predicted 'because she does not have the armed might. Paris will do what London does. The whole affair must unroll at top speed. For high stakes you got to run big risks.'²³ Goebbels could not get that word risks out of his mind. Hitler's talk with Henlein turned to finding a suitable pretext to invade. That afternoon, September 2, Hitler delivered another little pep talk to them all—Goebbels, Henlein, Ribbentrop, Bodenschütz, Bormann, Speer, and Hoffmann—on 'keeping one's nerve.' Goebbels passed the message on to Hanke and Dietrich, who were beginning to waver.²⁴

For all Goebbels' atrocity propaganda, there was none of the putrid enthusiasm for war that had marked August 1914. Berndt made it clear to him.²⁵ Funk was pessimistic too.²⁶ France noisily called up its reservists and Goebbels had to remind himself that they were already

Aug

1938

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Aug 1938

fighting a war—of nerves.²⁷ When Czech police bludgeoned more local German officials, he turned the entire German press loose again to help Henlein in his assigned task of bringing the crisis to boiling point.²⁸ *The Times* of London suddenly sided with Hitler, recommending that the Sudeten territories be formally restored to Germany.²⁹ On the ninth the British ambassador adopted a similar line in private as the annual Nuremberg rally began. Goebbels concluded from this that Britain did not want war.³⁰ But others like Neurath, the former foreign minister upon whom Hitler occasionally relied as an elder statesman for advice, still preferred waiting another year. 'Waiting,' scoffed Goebbels. 'That's what they all say when they don't want to act at all.' Hitler's ambassadors in London and Paris warned that both Britain and France would march. 'We must just stick to the Führer,' retorted Goebbels, almost piously. 'He commands, we obey. . . I trust in him as I do in God.' But even as he wrote these lines, the nagging private fears returned: 'Just one question gnaws away me, day and night: what's it to be, war or peace?' Smiling enigmatically, Henderson assured him that France was honor-bound to aid Czechoslovakia, and then Britain could not stand aside.³¹

At the Nuremberg rally, he branded Prague a 'hotbed of the bolshevik conspiracy against Europe.'³² But it was in Hitler's closing speech that the world first heard of his determination to go to war. The Sudeten Germans, he declared, were not alone. As they marched out together, Hitler whispered to Goebbels, 'Let's see what happens now.'³³

'Things are panning out just as we wanted,' triumphed Goebbels as the world's press betrayed the first signs of panic. The death toll began to rise—'over fifty in one village,' he recorded, carelessly confusing fact with his own propaganda. Addressing his editors he called for tough nerves and perseverance.

Then came the totally unexpected. The elderly British prime minister Neville Chamberlain offered to visit Hitler the next day.³⁴ Still hoping for a military showdown which would give him all of Czechoslovakia, Hitler had little opinion but to agree. For a moment Prague faltered, and relaxed her pressure. 'Nevertheless,' observed the cynical propaganda minister, 'we make a splash about "Czech terror." Things have got to be brought up to boiling point.'³⁵ Chamberlain met Hitler at the Berghof on September 15. At first Goebbels learned nothing except that the prime minister had asked for a further meeting at Bad Godesberg. While awaiting word from Hitler Goebbels addressed a steadying lecture to five hundred gau officials in Berlin.³⁶ Hitler invited him down to the Obersalzberg for a briefing. He flew down on the seventeenth, taking Hanke, Fritzsche (press section), and Hadamowsky (radio) with him. Hitler lunched alone with him and then invited him aloft to the newly built Eagle's Nest, along with Himmler and the favored British journalist Ward Price.³⁷ The Eagle's Nest was a teahouse built by Bormann's engineers on top of the Kehlstein, reached by an amazing lift inside the mountain. Here Hitler described Chamberlain to these listeners as an 'ice-cool,' calculating Englishman. He had not minced his language.

London might fear a world war, he had boasted, but he was prepared to accept that risk.

The English prime minister, he said, had undertaken to persuade Cabinet and the French to endorse a plebiscite in the disputed territory. This did not suit Hitler's purpose at all; but he expected Prague to hold out, which would leave the way open for the total solution he preferred. It was a war of nerves. Goebbels predicted that Prague would buckle under this pressure. Hitler disagreed. 'In 1948,' he said, 'it will be three hundred years since the Peace of Münster [Westphalia]. We've to liquidate that peace treaty by then.' Praising Goebbels' propagandist effort so far, he added: 'We've half won the war already.'³⁸

The Czech president Beneš, abandoned by Chamberlain, conducted frantic telephone conversations with his legation in London. 'Despair the only word,' recorded Goebbels smugly, reading the wiretaps Hitler showed him. 'He [Beneš] just murmurs, "Yes, yes."³⁹ Capitalizing London's sudden helpfulness Hitler upped the ante. He sketched a map showing still greater territorial demands, ready for when he next met Chamberlain. With Goebbels limping at his side, he strutted up and down the Berghof terrace beneath a clear canopy of stars.

Goebbels issued fresh instructions to Berndt to create the necessary frontier incidents. Hitler mobilized Czechoslovakia's other neighbors. The cowardly Hungarians made no move, but the Poles were more obliging.⁴⁰ They had already hinted that they would entertain Hitler's demand for the return of Danzig, and in gratitude Hitler dictated to the ambassador what Poland might now demand with his blessing from Czechoslovakia.⁴¹ According to what he told Goebbels, as they set together with Ribbentrop by train for Godesberg, the Polish ambassador had 'promised' force against Czechoslovakia.⁴² Goebbels still predicted that the Czechs would ultimately cave in. Hitler however told him that he was poised to strike on September 28—just one week's time.⁴³

Goebbels attended both days of the Hitler-Chamberlain conference at Godesberg. The first on September 22 began at four P.M. and lasted for three hours. Hitler's new sketch-map shocked the Englishman. But Hitler reminded him that the frontiers would look somewhat worse if eventually had to use force. (The main thing, realized Goebbels, listening to them haggling, was to get behind the formidable Czech mountain fortifications.) Chamberlain said he would have to consult, and they adjourned, Hitler and Goebbels to a city lunch that chugged up the Rhine into the gentle autumn evening. The next morning Chamberlain sent over a letter to Hitler. The Nazi wiretaps on the British and Czech international phone lines left no doubt now that Beneš was playing for time. Word came shortly that Beneš had mobilized. Undeterred, Hitler handed new demands to Chamberlain.

There was a lot of playacting on both sides. At that evening's crisis session, Chamberlain rose haughtily to his feet and threatened to walk out.⁴⁴ Goebbels did not know what to make of it all. His private alarm deepened. War hysteria was seeping into the German press.⁴⁵ Flying by

to Berlin with Hitler he found a mood there wavering between noisy jingoism and grim 'determination'—for want of a more gloomy word which he could safely enter in his diary. The wiretaps showed Beneš digging his heels in. Would he give way? The question dominated Hitler's lunch table. 'The Führer thinks not,' recorded Goebbels. 'I say he will.' Hitler again said that he would attack on or after the twenty-eighth. 'That gives the Führer five days,' calculated Goebbels, adding: 'He fixed these dates way back on May 28.' He somberly agreed that the radical solution was the best. Ribbentrop predicted that nobody would lift a finger to help Prague. For once Goebbels found himself agreeing with him, but he still did not want war.⁴⁶

Hitler proved right and Goebbels wrong: Beneš rejected Hitler's territorial demands outright. Goebbels again had to lecture his editors on steadfastness, and stepped up the propaganda war still further.

The unwitting party faithful might cheer but others—intellectuals, generals, and even ministers—began bombarding Hitler with warnings.⁴⁷ Goebbels heard Himmler complaining about the uselessness of the older generals. Hitler gave the Czechs until two P.M. on the twenty-eighth to agree to his terms. Goebbels mechanically told Berndt to stir up discord between Beneš and his people using clandestine transmitters based in Vienna.⁴⁸

This war of nerves reached its climax on the twenty-seventh, when Hitler received Chamberlain's dapper emissary Sir Horace Wilson. He told Goebbels later that he had screamed at the Englishman, accusing him of evasions.⁴⁹ 'The Führer,' summarized an admiring Goebbels, 'believes in his mission with the sureness of a sleepwalker. Not for one moment does his hand tremble. A great genius in our midst. . . . One has to serve him with profound devotion. He is more true, more simple, more farsighted than any German statesman that has gone before.'⁵⁰

The German public was spared these insights. War panic now gripped its heart. That evening Hitler ordered a mechanized division to rumble through the capital. He sat watching from the darkened foyer of the chancellery as the armor rattled past, while Goebbels mingled unseen with the crowds.⁵¹ 'The public,' he wrote anxiously afterward, 'is filled with a profound worry. They know that we're coming into the last lap now.'

As the deadline for Hitler's ultimatum approached, Goebbels decided to head him off. The British and French ambassadors got to Hitler first, bringing fragrant fresh proposals. Ribbentrop was furious that war might be averted. 'He nurtures a blind hatred of Britain,' decided Goebbels. 'Göring, Neurath, and I urge Hitler to accept. . . . You can't get into what may well turn into a world war over procedural issues. Göring . . . totally shares my viewpoint and gives Ribbentrop a piece of his mind.' 'Mein Führer,' he blurted out over lunch in Hitler's chancellery on the twenty-eighth, 'if you think that the German public is thirsting for war, you are wrong. They watch its approach with a leaden sense of apathy.'⁵²

In that instant Hitler changed his mind. According to Ribbentrop's Staatssekretär Ernst von Weizsäcker it was primarily Goebbels who per-

Sept 1938

264 III: THE REICH MINISTER

sued Hitler to back off from war at this, the eleventh hour.⁵³ Perhaps Hitler even welcomed his moderating influence. He immediately approved suggestions for a four-power conference to take place in Munich the next day. Goebbels saw the likely outcome thus: 'We take the Sudeten territories peacefully; the grand solution remains wide open, and we prepare ourselves for future contingencies.' He was due to address half a million people in the Lustgarten that evening. He prudently decided not to reveal anything of the morrow's certain victory. 'Nothing would be more improper,' he explained to his staff after that historic luncheon, 'than to announce Chamberlain's coming. That would unleash incredible public scenes of jubilation; and then the British would realize the truth—that all our belligerence is just bluster.'⁵⁴

Remaining in Berlin, he warned his editors not to let their campaign about 'Czech terror' flag either. Soon Hanke, sent to Munich as observer, reported that Mussolini, Chamberlain, and the French premier Edouard Daladier had agreed to Hitler's demands. Czechoslovakia should hand over the disputed territories in the first ten days of October. 'So that's all we get for the time being,' noted Goebbels. 'Under circumstances,' he added, hiding his relief, 'we are unable to realize the grand plan'—seizing all of Czechoslovakia.⁵⁵

Hitler had dramatically increased the Reich's international prestige a stinging rebuff to Beneš, the four powers had not even invited Czechs to the Munich conference. 'And now,' triumphed Goebbels in his unpublished diary, 'let us rearm, rearm, and rearm!' Once more ordered his gaudy to prepare a hero's welcome for the Führer at the Anhalter railroad station.⁵⁶

He had other causes to rejoice. 'Ribbentrop fell flat on his face,' wrote. 'Göring is livid with him. Calls him a pompous prima donna.' He had already commented during June on the foreign minister's pathological hatred of the English—a relic of the treatment meted out to him as ambassador by the British establishment.⁵⁷ 'The Führer,' Goebbels had added in September 'is in for a big surprise with him'.⁵⁸

Back in Berlin, Hitler told his lunch guests about the famous 'peace paper,' the Anglo-German declaration that Chamberlain had sprung him afterward for signature. He did not believe that the British meant honor it, he said. Chamberlain was a fox. 'He tackles each issue ice-cold he reiterated. 'We're really going to have watch out for these British.'

Over dinner the next day he again revealed his unshatterable resolve to destroy Czechoslovakia, as Goebbels recalled his words. He doggedly argued that London and Paris would not have intervened. Goebbels continued to differ on that score.⁶⁰

A few days later however Hitler personally inspected the Czech fortifications and he realized that it was fortunate after all that there had not been any fighting. 'We would have shed a lot of blood,' he privately admitted. It was a good thing, Goebbels decided, that things had turned out the way they had.⁶¹

1938

31: The Real Chum

ON the day of Hitler's triumph in Munich an ugly revelation awaits Goebbels in Berlin. Given the evasions of his diary in matters matrimonial, however, we cannot properly speculate on what it is. Suffice to say that police chief Helldorff visits him late that day and Goebbels then records: 'A sad and difficult day for me personally.' He adds philosophically, 'If it isn't one thing it's another.'¹

Four painful weeks have already passed since he last visited Schwanenwerder and saw his children. 'Papa has been naughty,' Magda cruelly tells them. 'He's not allowed to come here any more.'² She herself has begun drinking heavily and hitting the night spots—a world of chrome, black leather, and subdued lights. She frequents cabarets where the stand-up comics make fun of her own husband. Admiral Raeder's adjutant is drinking in one such club when Magda utters a boozy invitation to him to share her bar-stool. After a flurry of indiscretions about her marital problems, she invites the navy captain and his pals back to her home.³ Five years later, when Goebbels snarls in his famous total war speech about 'the nightclub crowd who lolled around in stylish bars,' Magda—seated in the front row—has no doubt whatever who is meant by that.⁴

Joseph Goebbels thought he had friends, as Lida Baarova would sadly remark years later: But he had none. Behind his back Karl Hanke starts the sniggering rumor that in the street confrontation early in 1937 Lida's lover Gustav Fröhlich had actually socked Goebbels. Improbable though it is—given that the minister throws men into concentration camp just for their opinions—the story sweeps Germany and delights foreign capitals.⁵ A cabaret artiste guffaws, 'We'd all like to be fröhlich sometime!'—the word means contented. Schacht calls the minister's affairs a public scandal.⁶ Himmler complains to Hitler that he has never liked the Goebbels genus, but has so far kept his views to himself: 'Now he's the most hated man in Germany,' he says. There was a time, he continues, when Goebbels used to sound off against the Jews who sexually coerced their female employees; now the minister is doing the same himself. 'It's obvious,' adds the Reichstührer, 'that they are not doing it for love, but because he's propaganda minister.'

Shocked by all this, Hitler orders a watch kept on Goebbels' former girlfriend Lida Baarova. Gestapo limousines cruise up and down outside

see

1939?
from
Rosenbergs
diary
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Oct 3, 1938

her rented villa in Grunewald. But Goebbels, feigning indifference, makes no overt effort to contact her.

During the four dramatic weeks preceding Munich, what he calls private *misère* has receded into the background. For four more weeks he does not see Magda at all. On the verge of a nervous breakdown, occasionally resorts to subterfuge to see Lida. He directs Hilde Körb to take Lida to the theater, and feasts his eyes upon her from a few rows away. He phones Hilde repeatedly to ask how Lida is. He sees Nuremberg rally as a welcome distraction from 'dumb thoughts,' evidently meaning suicide, because the next day, after talking a party official out of shooting himself over a silly blunder, he remarks grimly in diary: 'We all make silly blunders.'⁸ He gets his mother to see Magda Berlin—to whom alone, ultimately, he is beholden—but it's 'the same old melody.'⁹ 'I can expect no quarter,' he writes the next day.¹⁰ After phoning his mother again he gives up. 'In Berlin there's the devil to fear. But I'm immune to all that now.'¹¹ Deprived now of both Magda and Lida's company, he risks a 'motor outing' upon his return from Nuremberg to Berlin ('just to get some fresh air,' he pleads in diary) and then another ten days later, followed by a 'drive through Grunewald, just to get fresh air' the next day.¹² Lida still lives there, of course. During early October, these motor outings multiply.

While his own Staatssekretär Karl Hanke is now gathering evidence to aid Magda, Goebbels apparently suspects nothing. On October 3 he has a long talk with him about his personal affairs. 'Hanke is very nice about it, a real chum,' he informs his diary. 'I've got one person at least I can talk things over with. I couldn't have gone on like this.'¹³ A few days later, after another little motor outing, Goebbels again bends Hanke's ear about his plight. 'He proves very attentive and understanding. He then has a very important conversation and this sets my mind very much at rest.' Evidently Hanke has telephoned Magda, and she 'agrees' to see him. 'I am glad,' repeats Goebbels, 'that I now have at least one person I can speak with. These last few weeks I have often felt so lonesome as I deserted....'¹⁴

Lida Baarova is now filming *The Sweetheart* with Willy Fritsch and Grete Weiser. She confides in Grete without realizing that she too is cahoots with the double-dealing Hanke.¹⁵ When Hanke shows Magda his dossier it contains the names of thirty-six women and copies that he has filched of Goebbels' correspondence with them.¹⁶

Visiting Saarbrücken with Hitler, Goebbels phones Hanke to ask the outcome of his visit to Magda. 'Seems it's all over,' he writes afterward, perplexed. 'Nothing I can do will change that. I've tried my utmost. But if that's how it is, so be it. I feel crushed.'¹⁷ Hanke reports back in person on the tenth. 'Things seem pretty hopeless,' decides the minister, caught up in the drama of his own situation. 'A human tragedy is unfurling with neither blameless nor guilty parties. Fate itself has taken a hand and has spoken.' Oddly, he tells his diary that Hanke has questioned 'all' the parties concerned—a hint at infidelities by Magda? He asks Hanke not

Oct 15, 1938

to report all these facts, as a neutral chum, to the Führer.¹⁸ He can no longer keep Hitler out of it. 'I shall neither complain nor whine,' he writes, melodramatically. 'I have no cause for hatred or indignation. I await the Führer's decision and shall obediently comply. . . . Things just can't go on like this.'¹⁹

Hanke in fact sees Hitler the next day at Godesberg, and regales him with salacious details of his own minister's wrongdoings—like how he has kept foreign ambassadors waiting while he entertains his female visitors within. Waiting for word from Godesberg, the craziest of notions race through Goebbels' brain. He cruises the streets 'just taking in fresh air.' At last Hanke phones: Hitler is willing to see Goebbels soon, he says, quietly relishing the moment when, he imagines, he will step into the disgraced minister's shoes. 'At any rate he knows how things stand,' writes Goebbels, confident that he has got in first with his version of affairs.²⁰ After a sleepless night he goes for another little drive, 'to collect my thoughts.'²¹

FOR Goebbels the suffocating ministerial routine has resumed—the struggle to lever out the Jews,²² the Sudeten referendum, and the inauguration of the magnificent new theater that a grateful Hitler has donated to the Saar.²³ Ignoring the sunshine outside, he mopes for hours in his darkened ministerial chambers, snapping pencils, and writing endlessly in his diary.²⁴ His brain gyrates pathologically around his personal miseries. His diary reflects his pain—page after page of self-centered whining tinged with a masochistic delight in every moment of this self-flagellation. Once Magda allows the three older children over to him. They all cry loudly and Helga whispers sweet nothings in his ear. Goebbels is still hungry for their childish chatter when it is time for them to leave. He broods alone that night, crushed by his own solitude, and toying with words. 'Those who love me are not allowed to see me: those who can see me don't love me any more.' He puts his affairs in order and closes his diary.²⁵

That Saturday afternoon, October 15, he tells Rach to chauffeur him out to Lanke. He is tired of the world—he writes—and tired of life itself. He has decided to resort to that most feminine of wiles, the feigned suicide attempt.²⁶ He swallows two Phanodorm sleeping tablets, washed down with alcohol, and goes to bed. He sleeps around the clock while, he assumes, Rach and the panicking manservant Kaiser try to arouse him. All he is aware of is a stabbing pain near his heart. He thinks he is dying, but—he writes—Heaven is again merciful. Apart from Rach and Kaiser however nobody pays him the slightest attention.²⁷

His head throbbing from the barbiturates, Goebbels stays out at Lanke until Tuesday, victim of a monster hangover. 'In the afternoon I drive back in despair to Berlin.' Among the films he previews that evening is *Prussian Love Story*, an episode from the life of Prince Wilhelm of Prussia. Lida Baarova plays the prince's first true love, a Polish-Lithuanian aristocrat, the Princess Elisa Radziwill. Two bitter-sweet hours later the tears

Oct 21/22, 1938

are streaming down Dr Goebbels' cheeks. 'I didn't think it would be hard for me to see it,' he confesses in the diary.²⁸

Worse is to come, far worse: On Wednesday he learns from police captain Helldorff the cruel, humiliating truth about Hanke's disloyalty.²⁹ Hanke his old comrade in the fight for Berlin: His protégé: His own Staatssekretär! Meanwhile Magda has taken to Emmy Göring her plain tales about her husband, calling him 'the devil in human form'.³⁰ Helldorff at least is a true friend, he reflects. He sends for Walter Funk on Thursday morning, and Funk offers to see Göring. 'Take Helldorff too,' pleads Goebbels. 'He knows best of all.'³¹

Hitler is away, triumphantly touring Bohemia, and does not return to the Berghof until late on the twentieth.³² Meanwhile Goebbels ostracizes Hanke. 'He is my cruelest disappointment.' He drives out to Carin at noon on October 21, and puts his case to the field-marshal; he argues that Magda has turned frigid, and that he is therefore entitled to go in fresher pastures.³³ Göring listens kindly, even jovially, proposes radical solutions, and undertakes to see the Führer. In private he chortles at Goebbels' discomfiture; but he lectures Emmy that she's got to see Goebbels does have a point.³⁴ 'Good ole Göring!' writes Goebbels. 'I really gotten to like him. We part as true pals.'

Relieved, he takes Helldorff off to Hamburg, where he is to spend the night. Here there is unpleasant news indeed. Magda has got to Hitler first: she is at this moment taking tea with Hitler up at the Kehlstein teahouse; and she has sent for the eldest children to complete the picture. 'Things are hotting up,' remarks Goebbels.³⁵ His speech at Hamburg Hanseatic Hall is as truculent and cynical as ever.³⁶

No detail of the odd events that Saturday October 22 eludes the foreign diplomats in Hamburg. Goebbels duly attends the reception at the old house but is missing from the foundation-stone ceremony of the *Hamburger Abendblatt*, the local party newspaper. Even the British consul general learns that Dr Goebbels has received 'sudden orders to attend Herr Hitler at Berchtesgaden.'³⁷ Goebbels calls in Helldorff and Funk, but the latter is nowhere to be found. 'I make up my mind to fight Goebbels writes. 'I shall defend my name.'

At the Berghof Hitler receives him at once, speaks of solidarity, *raison d'état*, and the greater common cause. Helldorff, duly called upon by Goebbels to testify, backs him up but on the main issue—evidently Goebbels' proposal to that he resign, divorce Magda, and marry Lida—Hitler will not budge. Magda herself is now called in—the first time Goebbels has seen his estranged wife in two months. She is at first rather aggressive, he notes; but ultimately they both have to submit to Hitler's impatient diktat. He orders a moratorium, a cease-fire. For three months they are to live together, at the end of which he will permit a divorce both still desire.³⁸

Hitler disapproves of Goebbels' behavior, but he cannot dispense with him—not right now. 'The Führer,' Goebbels records afterward, 'detained me for a long time alone. He confides to me his most profound

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innermost secrets.... He sees a really serious conflict brewing in the none-too-distant future. Probably with Britain, which is steadily preparing for it. We shall have to fight back, and thus will be decided the hegemony over Europe. Everything must be geared to that moment. And thus must take precedence over all personal hopes and desires. What are we individuals compared with the fate of great states and nations?³⁹

With Speer and Eva Braun they all take the brass-walled elevator up to the lofty Kehlstein teahouse to celebrate the Goebbels' shotgun reconciliation. Helga and Hilde smother their father with joyful kisses. Hitler instructs a photographer to capture the reconciliation on camera. Berlin radio broadcasts appeals for Heiner 'Shortleg' Kurzbein—is there to be no end of the minister's humiliation!—to report to the propaganda ministry immediately. As head of the photo section, his services are needed urgently because Hitler has decreed that the Goebbels' 'family photo' will appear in every newspaper in Germany.⁴⁰ 'It will help to expunge a great deal of the unpleasantness,' agrees Goebbels. But much will remain. Hitler has also bowed to Magda's demand that Lida Baarova withdraw from society and the film world entirely.⁴¹ Eva Braun, an avid film fan, writes to Lida coldly severing their friendship.⁴²

Leaving Magda behind at the Berghof, Goebbels returns by overnight train to Berlin with Helldorff; he is frantic with fear that he may never regain his esteem in Hitler's eyes. In the morning—it is now October 24—he sends Helldorff over to break the cruel news to Lida. Calling in his senior staff he strikes the same heroic pose he has seen Prince Wilhelm adopt in *Prussian Love Story* and declares: 'In the conflict between love and duty I have made the choice that men have made throughout history when faced with their duty to the people.'⁴³

Shortly Helldorff returns, badly shaken, with word that Lida, whom he has summoned to police HQ, is demanding to speak with Dr Goebbels and is threatening to kill herself; a doctor has had to sedate her with morphine in Hilde Körber's villa. Göring phones, invites him out to Carinhall, and promises to back him all down the line on condition that Goebbels drop his claim to be the second personality in the country.⁴⁴

'On the critical issue,' records Goebbels himself tantalizingly, without being more specific, 'he immediately knows a way out.'⁴⁵ At 9:30 P.M. he phones Hilde from Carinhall, while Göring listens in, and asks her to put Lida on the line. 'I'm out at my good friend's house,' he says. She will know who that is. 'He's standing next to me. Liduschka, keep a stiff upper lip, whatever they may do to you. Don't be angry. Stay the way you are.' Distraught and her mind numbed with morphine, the actress is unable to reply. They never speak again.⁴⁶

Her torment is just beginning. She is confined to Hilde Körber's villa with her phone tapped and two secret police on the door.⁴⁷ She is allowed out on Friday October 28 when her latest film is premièred at the Gloria Palace on Kurfürstendamm. Goebbels notes, 'The première of *The Gambler* went off reasonably well.'⁴⁸ There are loud sniggers from the audience at one scene when her father, reproached for squandering

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their money, snarls: 'Money? Go get more money from your Doctor!' Lida goes on stage at the end there are shouts: 'Minister's whore!' ; calls out to the unseen hecklers, 'How much have you been paid!' ^{Karl} Hanke's hired hooligans have done their work well. There are sim- ^{lar} scenes at the weekend performances, and on Monday the film is with- ^{drawn}.⁴⁹ Her life will become a nightmare from which there is no ^{revel} escape. Julius Schaub, Hitler's personal adjutant, warns her not to leave Germany—'Something might happen to you if you try.'⁵⁰

Goebbels tries to pick up the pieces of his life. He tackles the person problems of the advertising council and the film industry, he sti- ^{ffly} discusses with Hanke the wartime use of Germany's radio networks, ^{and} he admonishes Helldorff and Funk to keep still tongues in their ^{heads}. ('We've got a stool-pigeon in this office,' he writes, 'somebody blabbers to outsiders. I'm going to smoke him out.')

On October 25, the three months' probationary period begins. That evening Goebbels collects Magda and the children at Tempelhof. berates her until six A.M.; she listens with set and expressionless features. 'Ghastly things come to light,' he wails in his notes, without saying ^{what}. He retires to bed, his fevered brain battered down with Phanodori and awakes to finish off this (previously unpublished) volume of the ^{diary} without having written the name of Lida Baarova in it once.⁵²

As for Hitler, the whole episode leaves him with a bitter sense of betrayal. Rosenberg, Schacht, Hanke, and Himmler tell him of the damage that Goebbels has done by his philandering. One French ^{the} newspaper prints a publicity photo from The Gambler showing Lida Baarova fending off a tuxedo'd villain on whose shoulders they have imposed Führer's head.

Goebbels is falling from grace, head over heels, and he knows it. Sick with worry, he begins work on a palliative, an adoring twenty-five-chapter panegyric entitled 'Hitler the Man.'⁵³ For the next eight weeks the diary shows him dictating this book and revising it; he even has it proof-print and negotiates the sale of rights with Eher Verlag in Germany and Hearst Corporation in the United States. Hitler however, none too happy about being linked in the public eye with Goebbels, asks to run his ^{own} over it, and in mid-January 1939 he stops its publication 'for the time being.'⁵⁴ The book is never seen again.

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Oct 25

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Oct 29, 1938

32: Broken Glass

IT is surely against this fraught and unstable background—the marriage-war with Magda, the sniping from his enemies—that we have to examine the historic episode which follows only a few days later: Kristallnacht, the Night of Broken Glass, November 9–10, 1938.¹ Whose was the evil brain behind this outrage? How far was Hitler himself involved in authorizing or endorsing it? Once again the hitherto unpublished Goebbels Diaries provide clues to what really happened—but they are only *clues*, which need proper interpretation.

As the motto with which he opens the next volume of his unpublished diary shows ('It is suffering alone that makes men of us!') he has spent the last week of October 1938 wallowing in self-pity, unable to sleep without sedatives, wearily reopening the wounds of the past with Magda, talking of 'ways out' and flirting with thoughts of suicide, dosing himself with narcotics, and sleeping around the clock.² He admonishes Helldorff once again to keep a still tongue in his head about it all, he decides to replace yet another adjutant, Diether von Wedel (he 'has betrayed me wherever he could').³ When October 29 comes, he not once but twice writes of it as 'the saddest birthday of my life.'⁴ Magda wakes him from his drugged sleep and 'frostily' congratulates him; his two eldest girls recite their poems; there are artificially glowing reports in the press and photographs of Hanke speaking the birthday eulogy in the ministry. Not surprisingly he finds something spooky about it all. 'What else really is there left for me to do in this world? I can't see any more jobs for me.'⁵ Regardless of Hitler's injunctions, Magda is still carved of ice as November begins.⁶ The children neither know nor ask the reasons for the perpetual frostiness of the family meals at Schwanenwerder.⁷ He loathes the whole human race and yet again tells his diary so.⁸

seen

'I am glad to get back to work,' he writes on November 3, adding the heartfelt sigh: 'How I wish the past could be forgotten!'

At a beer evening at Weimar during the Book Week, Magda, wearing a fetching strawberry-colored dress with a generous lace décolleté, is the star of the evening while Dr Goebbels chain-smokes endlessly and glowers into his beer.⁹ 'It is still not working out,' he writes on the fourth after another late row with her.¹⁰

GERMAN propaganda drifted, with no firm hand on the helm. The British embassy, trying to detect a pattern, found it aimless and inconsistent.¹¹

Oct 23, 1938

272 III: THE REICH MINISTER

Goebbels now seemed to be trying to conjure up a British 'bogy' evidently an echo of Hitler's gloomy review of foreign policy to him w at the Berghof on October 23.

Goebbels had sidelined the party's propaganda directorate (the Reich propagandaleitung, based in Munich) by setting up local offices under his direct ministerial control, and through these channels he often dictated policy to the party itself. His direct and evil influence as gauleiter on the Berlin police has already been noted.

Nationwide, his anti-Jewish campaign gathered momentum. Göring was already purging the Jews from the business sector with a vigor paralleled by Goebbels' sweep in the chamber of culture.¹² Conrad Helldorff liaised closely with Goebbels on the continuing and orchestrated police harassment of the Jews that had begun in June.¹³ More Warsaw and Prague were following suit. 'The Jews are being driven from country to country,' observed Goebbels, 'reaping the fruits of their eternal intrigues, hate campaigns, and dirty tricks.'¹⁴ Poland announced steps designed to keep the seventy thousand Polish Jews living abroad from returning; to forestall this ban, on October 28 the German police rounded up fifteen thousand Polish Jews and shunted them back across the border into Poland.¹⁵

This operation indirectly triggered the events that now follow, although there is some frail evidence that LICA, the Paris-based International League against Antisemitism which had lurked behind the assassination of Wilhelm Gustloff, also had a hand in them. On November 7 a seventeen-year-old wastrel, a penniless illegal immigrant of Jewish-Polish extraction, pumped several bullets into a German diplomat in Paris, and Goebbels' life suddenly had meaning again.¹⁶ Somehow the lad, Herschel Grynszpan, had found the money to check into an expensive hotel one block away from LICA's HQ and to purchase the pistol which he gunned down the German official, Counselor Ernst vom Rath. Even before news of the attack leaked out, LICA's attorney Moro Girelli arrived to represent him.

At first Goebbels had overlooked the news from Paris. He had risen early on November 6 at Schwanenwerder to go to Fürstenberg to visit an N.S.V. (National Socialist Welfare) home for mothers and infants from Berlin. 'I think Magda's glad to see the back of me,' he wrote licking the emotional wounds sustained in the prolonged fray with his wife. Back in Berlin he went out with 'some people' to Erich Capraz's Laugh-in, one of the premier cabarets in the city, and laughed himself sick—according to his doubtful diary—at a sketch titled 'Family'. There is little doubt who was its butt.¹⁷

On November 7, as he and Helldorff took the morning train to Munich he ordered the Paris shooting given only two inches on the *Völkischer Beobachter's* second page.¹⁸ Far more important was the solemn anniversary of the November 9, 1923 putsch, now a pivot of the Nazi calendar with speeches by Hitler and a midnight swearing-in ceremony for S.S. Goebbels' diary shows him conferring on the way down to Munich

Nov 7

Nov 8, 1938

BROKEN GLASS 273

with his new chef de bureau Dr Werner Naumann ('a decent chap'), with Minister of the Interior Dr Wilhelm Frick on Reich reform, and Wilhelm Fanderl, editor of Berlin's *12 Uhr Blatt*.

THEN however Ernst vom Rath's condition took a turn for the worse. Hitler ordered his promotion—an ominous sign that he was not expected to live. The Führer's attitude was one of laissez-faire; Goebbels however saw his chance. As surgeons battled to save the shooting victim, he swore to take revenge. He ordered press and radio to blame the outrage on the 'international criminal Jewish rabble.'¹⁹ *Angriff* published photographs of Frankfurter, the killer of Gustloff, and Grynspan, the Paris assassin, with pictures of the British politicians Winston Churchill, Clement Attlee, and Duff Cooper scurrilously captioned 'Jewish murderers and those who put them up to it.' The party newspaper *Völkischer Beobachter* published a whole page on the Paris murder attempt. Summarizing these events, Goebbels wrote: 'But now [NOVEMBER 8] the German press makes itself heard. And now we're using plain talk. Major antisemitic demonstrations in Hesse. The synagogues are burned down. If only one could now give free rein to the public's outrage!'²⁰ ~~Ⓢ~~

On November 8 he conferred with propaganda officials in Munich. According to his diary the topic was merely the Sudeten gau election campaign, but in the light of antisemitic outbreaks in Hesse, Anhalt, and Saxony on that day and the next it certainly cannot be ruled out that he discussed reprisals for the Paris outrage too. He then spent the afternoon working on his new Hitler book. In the evening Hitler spoke in the Bürgerbräu to the party veterans, viciously attacking Churchill, Eden, and Duff Cooper until tears of laughter streamed down every cheek. 'He's rendering these three unfit for government office,' wrote Goebbels, explaining Hitler's intent, 'and a good job too.' Afterward he invited Hitler to his regular café, the [redacted] on the Marienplatz, facing the city hall. Until three A.M. they talked about horses, the Romanian monarchy, punishments for reckless driving, and their future plans for Germany's screen and stage. After that Goebbels carried on working back in his hotel, tired but unable to sleep.²¹

The diary for the next day, the ninth, 'a gray November day,' opened with the traditional march to the Feldherrnhalle watched by immense crowds. 'The condition of the diplomat Rath shot by the Jew in Paris,' he noted, 'is still very grave. The German press opens up with a will.' Helldorff sent instructions to Berlin to disarm all the Jews. 'They've got a few things coming their way,' commented Goebbels. He resumed work on his Hitler manuscript, finding it a delight. More reports came in of demonstrations against the Jews, this time in Kassel and Dessau, with synagogues being set on fire and businesses demolished. Later that afternoon Goebbels learned that Rath had died of his gunshot wounds. 'Enough is enough,' he wrote. At five P.M. the official press agency released the news.²²

Events that evening, November 9, are crucial to the history of what

Ⓢ Ly's
fantasies
Nov.

the organ
always win
to sleep.

Nov.

followed. As Goebbels and Hitler set out to attend the Nazi reception in the old city hall, they learned that the police were intervening against anti-Jewish demonstrators in Munich. Hitler remarked that the police should not crack down too harshly under the circumstances.²³ 'Colossal activity,' the Goebbels diary entry reports, then claims: 'I brief the Führer on the affair. He decides: Allow the demonstrations to continue. Hold back the police. The Jews must be given a taste of the public anger for a change.' Deciding, so he wrote, that this policy was right and proper, Goebbels issued his own instructions immediately to the police and party.²⁴ These instructions are confirmed by at least one gauleiter who recalled that an urgent telegram signed by 'Hanke' (as Staatssekretär) went to all forty-two of Goebbels' local propaganda agencies²⁵ transmitting instructions directly, over the heads of local gauleiters, to the district propaganda directors—who were party officials—to orchestrate outrages against Jewish properties in conjunction with the local S.A. units acting in plain clothes.²⁶ It was already very similar to what Goebbels had organized in Berlin that summer. He had consulted neither the party's gauleiters nor the S.A. chief of staff before issuing these instructions.

Hitler subsequently left the dinner at the old city hall around nine P.M. according to other sources.²⁷ Gauleiter Rudolf Jordan now told Goebbels of widespread anti-Jewish violence in Magdeburg.²⁸ According to Bormann's adjutant Heim, Goebbels seemed taken aback by this: things were getting out of hand and the carefully propagated image of German law and order was taking a battering.²⁹ Deciding to make a virtue out of necessity, at about nine-thirty he limped up to the podium, signaled for silence, and announced the death of the German diplomat and the anti-Jewish incidents; he described the latter as evidence of a 'spontaneous' public outrage. The local British consulate learned that he also said that Jews were now fair game, and that 'the S.A. could do anything to them short of looting and plundering.'³⁰ He would not be surprised, another witness heard him say, 'if things got worse during the night.' The same witness saw Lutze however warn his old friend Goebbels that his S.A. men would keep well out of any pogrom.³¹ Goebbels himself recorded that after issuing his instructions he had made a brief speech to the Party leaders, greeted by storms of applause. 'Everybody makes a beeline for the telephones,' his diary entry reads. 'Now the public will take action.'

Several people who heard Goebbels' firebrand speech were uncomfortable. Karl Hederich, one of his department heads, felt that it conflicted with the tenor of Hitler's speech.³²

A few gau officials get cold feet [wrote Goebbels in his hitherto unpublished diary] but I keep pulling everybody together.³³ We must not allow this cowardly murder to go unpunished. Let things run their course. The Stosstrupp 'Hitler' [a shock-troop unit named after the Führer] sallies forth at once to deal with Munich. And things happen right away. A synagogue is smashed to smithereens. I try to save it from

the flames, but fail.³² Meanwhile I discuss financial issues with [the party treasurer Franz Xaver] Schwarz, the Jewish problem with [Julius] Streicher, and foreign policy with Ribbentrop: He too is of the opinion that we can now pull in the rest of Czechoslovakia by neutral methods. We just have to box cunning. [Czech foreign minister František] Chvalovský wants it. As for the others, we don't know.

Over to [Munich] gau HQ with [Gauleiter Adolf] Wagner. I now issue a detailed circular setting out what may be done [against the Jews] and what not. Wagner gets cold feet and trembles for his [i.e. Munich's] Jewish shops.³⁴ But I won't be deterred. Meanwhile the Stosstrupp goes about its business. And with no half measures. I direct [Werner] Wächter [director of the RPA, propaganda agency, in] Berlin to see that the synagogue in Fasanen Strasse is smashed. He just keeps saying, 'Honored to comply.'

It was by now midnight. Goebbels attended the impressive S.S. swearing-in ceremony at the Feldherrnhalle. Hitler spoke to these new officers, then went back to his apartment. Goebbels, leaving for his hotel, saw the skies flickering red. According to his diary—written up next morning—he hurried over to gau HQ, where nobody could tell him what was happening, then directed fire brigades to douse the fires so far as necessary to protect neighboring buildings. 'The Stosstrupp has wrought terrible damage,' he wrote.

With many conflicting orders on the wires, a brutal confusion reigned all over Germany. At 3:30 A.M. the S.A. commander of Marburg ordered his men to burn down the local synagogue (despite Lutze's misgivings).³⁵ Every synagogue in Darmstadt was destroyed despite orders to the contrary from Mannheim's S.A. Gruppenführer Herbert Lust, still in Munich. The synagogues in Bayreuth, Bamberg, and Reutlingen were also torched.³⁶

THERE seems little doubt about Goebbels' sole personal guilt, that he was not just made the scapegoat for others even higher. In the subsequent internal inquiry, the party's Supreme Court headed by Walter Buch—admittedly no friend of his—determined that the propaganda minister had issued 'oral instructions' which had 'probably been understood by every party official present to mean that the party was not to appear publicly as the originator of the demonstration, but that it was in fact to take over its organization and execution.'³⁷ After hearing these instructions, repeated at first hand by a party official in Munich and so similar to Goebbels' orders to Helldorff in June, the commander of one S.A. Gruppe had telephoned orders to his HQ in Kiel at 11:20 P.M. in the following terms: A Jew had fired the first shot; now the Jews must pay. There were 'totally superfluous' Jewish shops and synagogues in Friedrichstadt, Kiel, and Lübeck waiting to be destroyed; the local

* This sentence is surely blatant window-dressing by Goebbels for posterity, given what we know.

police were to be tipped off first. 'There is to be no looting,' the message continued (significantly confirming the British consulate's version). 'Nobody is to be roughed up. Foreign Jews are not to be touched. Meet any resistance with firearms. The Aktion is to be carried out in plain clothes and must be finished by five A.M.'³⁸ Once again the similarities with Goebbels' own secret narrative of his orders for the anti-Jewish outrages in Berlin in June 1938 are worth remarking upon.

The pogrom was soon out of control. Only three of the twenty-eight S.A. *Gruppen* received actual orders to stage demonstrations.³⁹ Fired by five years of Nazi oratory however the mob needed little encouragement. From all over the Reich the reports began to come in: First fifty, then seventy-five synagogues on fire. By dawn on November 10, 191 of the country's fourteen hundred synagogues had been destroyed; about 7,500 of the one hundred thousand Jewish shops had had their windows smashed. Thirty-six of the country's half-million Jews had been murdered, and hundreds more badly beaten.⁴⁰ 'The Führer,' claimed Goebbels in the diary, 'has directed that twenty or thirty thousand Jews are to be arrested immediately. That'll do it. Let them now see that our patience is exhausted.'

Wagner is still a bit half-hearted. But I don't let up. Wächter reports back to me, the order has been carried out.⁴¹ We go with [Julius] Schaub to the Artistes' Club to await further bulletins. In Berlin five synagogues are ablaze, then fifteen. Now the people's fury is aroused. This night it is impossible to do anything else against it. Not that I want to. Let it rip.

Schaub is on top form. His old *Stosstrupp* past comes flooding back. As I drive back to the hotel there is the sound of breaking glass. Bravo! Bravo! Like gigantic old kilns the synagogues are blazing. There is no danger to German property.

Nothing else in particular has to be done. I try to sleep for a few hours.

As he wrote these heartless lines the next morning, the overnight reports came in. 'As was to be expected. The entire nation is in uproar. This is one dead man who is costing the Jews dear. Our darling Jews will think twice in future before simply gunning down German diplomats.' And that, he wrote, concluding this extraordinary, unrepentant diary entry, was the object of the exercise.⁴²

WHAT of Himmler and Hitler? Both were totally unaware of what Goebbels had done until the synagogue next to Munich's Four Seasons Hotel was set on fire around one A.M. Heydrich, Himmler's national chief of police, was relaxing down in the hotel bar; he hurried up to Himmler's room, then telexed instructions to all police authorities to restore law and order, protect Jews and Jewish property, and halt any ongoing incidents.⁴³ The hotel management telephoned Hitler's apartment at Prinz-Regenten Platz, and thus he too learned that something was going

Nov 10, 1938

BROKEN GLASS 277

on.⁴⁴ He sent for the local police chief, Friedrich von Eberstein. Eberstein found him livid with rage.⁴⁵

According to Luftwaffe adjutant Nicolaus von Below, Hitler phoned Goebbels. 'What's going on?' he snapped, and: 'Find out!'

According to Julius Schaub, the most intimate of his aides, Hitler 'made a terrible scene with Goebbels' and left no doubt about the damage done abroad to Germany's name. He sent Schaub and his colleagues out into the streets to stop the looting (thus Schaub's postwar version).⁴⁶ Philipp Bouhler, head of the Führer's private chancellery, told one of Goebbels' senior officials that Hitler utterly condemned the pogrom and intended to dismiss Goebbels.⁴⁷ Fritz Wiedemann, another of Hitler's adjutants, saw Goebbels spending much of that night of November 9-10 'telephoning . . . to halt the most violent excesses.'⁴⁸ At 2:56 A.M. Rudolf Hess's staff also began cabling, telephoning, and radioing instructions to gauleiters and police authorities around the nation to halt the madness.⁴⁹ But twenty thousand Jews were already being loaded onto trucks and transported to the concentration camps at Dachau, Buchenwald, and Oranienburg. Hitler made no attempt to halt this inhumanity. He stood by, and thus deserved the odium that now fell on all Germany.

Goebbels had anticipated neither Hitler's fury nor, probably, such an uncontrollable, chaotic orgy of destruction. Not surprisingly he made no reference to this unwelcome turn of events in his diary. But perhaps this, rather than Lida Baarova, was the reason why he would write this *mea culpa* to Hitler six years later: 'In the twenty years that I have been with you, particularly in 1938 and 1939, I have occasioned you much private grief.'⁵⁰ Ribbentrop relates that when he tackled Hitler about the damage Goebbels had done, Hitler rejoined that this was true, but he could not let the propaganda minister go—not when he was just about to need him again.⁵¹

As more ugly bulletins rained down on him the next morning, November 10, 1938, Goebbels went to see Hitler to discuss 'what to do next'—there is surely an involuntary hint of apprehension in the phrase.⁵² Georg Wilhelm Müller of his ministry had meanwhile reported to him about the conflagrations in Berlin. Goebbels told his diary only, 'A good thing too,' but he immediately composed an ordinance calling a halt to 'operations' (*Aktionen*), and at 10 A.M. he broadcast a live appeal for order over the Deutschland Sender. While it spoke of the 'justifiable and comprehensible' public indignation at the Ernst vom Rath murder, it strictly forbade all further action against the Jews; it was repeated at hourly intervals and printed in next day's party newspapers.⁵³ The Jewish question, the item stated, would be resolved only by due process of law. Later that morning Goebbels directed that press and radio were to play down the damage—a few windows had been smashed and synagogues had caught fire, but otherwise, the news items were to suggest, 'the public's understandable indignation was its spontaneous answer to the murder of the embassy counselor.' 'Enough is enough,' the propaganda minister commented in his diary. 'If we let it continue, there's a danger

danger
~~that~~ the mob will take over. In the whole country the synagogues have been burned down.' He repeated yet again, with grim and vengeful satisfaction, 'Jewry is having to pay dear for this dead man.'⁵⁴

He made his report (on 'what to do next') to Hitler in the Osteria, the Führer's favorite Italian restaurant, and was careful to record this—perhaps slanted—note in his diary, which stands alone, and in direct contradiction to the evidence of Hitler's entire immediate entourage: 'He is in agreement with everything. His views are quite radical and aggressive. The *Aktion* itself went off without a hitch. A hundred dead. But no German property damaged.' Each of these five sentences was untrue, as will be seen. Goebbels continued: 'With minor alterations the Führer authorizes my decree re breaking off the *Aktionen*. I issue it immediately through the press. The Führer wants to proceed to very harsh measures against the Jews. They must repair their shops themselves. The insurance companies will pay them nothing. Then the Führer wants Jewish businesses gradually expropriated and their owners compensated with paper which we can [*illegible word*: repudiate?] at any time. Meanwhile people are starting with their own *Aktionen*. I issue appropriate secret decrees. We're waiting to see the repercussions abroad. For the time being there is silence there. But the hullabaloo will come.'

Despite the toughing-out tone of these entries, there are more than enough hints that Goebbels was deeply concerned by the extent of the pogrom and its effect on foreign opinion; and that he had hastily thrown everything into reverse. He hoped, he wrote, that the *Judenaktion* was over for the time being—'Provided there aren't any sequels,' he added with ill-concealed nervousness. But his troubles were just beginning.

I speak on the phone with Heyderich [*sic*]. The police bulletin from the entire Reich conforms with my own information. Order has been restored everywhere. Only in Bremen have there been ugly excesses. But they submerge from view in the overall *Aktion*. I arrange with Heyderich how the party and police are to cooperate on this.

Work on until evening. Reports come in from Berlin about really serious antisemitic outbreaks there. The public has taken over. But now there really must be an end to it. I have appropriate directives issued to the police and party.

Signing as the party's national director of propaganda, Goebbels issued a confidential 'communiqué' to all gau propaganda officials (printed opposite). It specifically alluded to his earlier orders (which are missing from the archives): 'I refer,' it began, 'to my today's announcement re ending the anti-Jewish demos and *Aktionen*.'

Together with the police, all gau HQs are to take all due steps to make good the demolished Jewish shops in the shortest possible time at the expense of their Jewish owners.

He gave notice that a government ordinance would follow voiding the liability of insurance companies to pay out on Jewish claims. 'Moreover

Nov 10, 1938

BROKEN GLASS 279

9.98
Nationalsozialistische Deutsche Arbeiterpartei
Gauleitung Bayerische Ostmark

Gaugeschäftsstelle:
Bayreuth, Maystraße 2
Fernsprecher Nummern 1005, 1003, 1005, 1008
Postfachkonto Brief Münchberg Nr. 29401



Regierung des Gaues: „Bayrisches Ostmark“, 33 Angelegenheiten
Geschäftsstelle und Hauptverwaltung aller Teilungen:
Gauleitung Bayerische Ostmark Ostb., Bayreuth, Maystraße 22
Telefon Nummern 1301, 1303, 1304, 1305

Der Gaupropagandaleiter

Schnellbrief

Bayreuth, den 10.11.1938.

Sehen, Datum und Gegenstand bei
Einsendung angegeben!
Ihr Seher:
Gegenstand:

Streng vertraulich !

An alle Kreisleiter und Kreispropagandaleiter
des Gaues Bayerische Ostmark .

Von nachstehender Bekanntmachung des Reichspropagandaleiters
Pg. Dr. Goebbels bitte ich Kenntnis zu nehmen.

Streng vertraulich!

Heil Hitler !

Im Auftrag:

Goebbels

Gauhauptstellenleiter.

Ich verweise auf meine heutige Bekanntmachung betreffs
Beendigung der antijüdischen Kundgebungen und Aktionen,
die auch bereits durch Presse und Rundfunk veröffentlicht
worden ist. Die Gauleitungen haben zusammen mit der Polizei
entsprechende Maßnahmen zu treffen, daß die demolierten
Jüdingeschäfte in kürzester Zeit auf Kosten ihrer jüdischen
Inhaber wieder in Ordnung gebracht werden.
Es steht eine Verordnung zu erwarten, nach der die Schäden,
die bei den antijüdischen Aktionen entstanden sind, nicht
von den Versicherungen getragen werden, sondern von den be-
troffenen Juden selbst. Weiterhin werden in kurzer Frist
noch eine Reihe von Maßnahmen gegen die Juden auf dem Ge-
setzes- oder Verordnungswege durchgeführt werden. Über diese
werde ich Sie rechtzeitig unterrichten.
Die antijüdischen Aktionen müssen mit derselben Schnellig-
keit, mit der sie entstanden sind, nunmehr eingestellt wor-
den. Sie haben den ihnen gewünschten und erwarteten Zweck
erfüllt. Sollte sich durch Vorgänge im Judentum des In- oder
Auslandes eine neue Lage ergeben, so wird rechtzeitig Mit-
teilung ergehen.

Heil Hitler !

Gez. Dr. Goebbels

Schäftsstelleformeln fallen bei allen paritätischen Gaupropagandaleitern der N.S.D.A.P.

On November 10, 1938 Goebbels issued an urgent circular telegram to all gau
propaganda chiefs cancelling the *Aktionen* against the Jews ordered the day before
(YIVO ARCHIVES, NEW YORK)

a series of measures will shortly be enacted against the Jews...? Most significant was the document's last paragraph: 'The anti-Jewish *Aktionen* must now be called off with the same rapidity with which they were launched. They have served their desired and anticipated purpose.'⁵⁵ It is worth remarking that Goebbels felt comfortable issuing *orders* both to other gauleiters and to police.⁵⁶

That evening Hitler received four hundred leading pressmen in the Führer Building and delivered an extraordinary secret speech to them. He made no mention of the pogrom, and no secret of his admiration for Dr Goebbels' *propaganda triumphs*.⁵⁷ Goebbels sat up until midnight listening to Hitler debating with the journalists, then 'had to' leave, as he put it, for Berlin. The foreign radio stations were now full of the pogrom. Things were getting out of hand. 'I assume full authority for Berlin,' he wrote. 'At such times of crisis, one man must take charge.'⁵⁸ Hitler stayed in Munich, perhaps keeping as much distance as possible from Dr Goebbels.

WERNER Naumann, who traveled back to Berlin with the minister, would state that Goebbels fulminated with suppressed anger against the extent of the pogrom and issued a public dressing down to his deputies Görhlitzer (in the Berlin gau) and Wächter (in the Reichspropagandaleitung, the party's propaganda HQ) for the synagogue fires when they met him on the railroad platform early on November 11.⁵⁹ Given the content of Goebbels' diary—as he and Wächter knew, he himself had ordered the synagogues destroyed—this scene displays nothing but his utter cynicism.

He drove straight out to Schwabenwerder for Magda's birthday. The broken glass had been swept away, the shattered store fronts were already boarded up. 'In Berlin,' he recorded, 'everything has remained calm during the night.' With further breathtaking cynicism he took the credit with his radio broadcast. 'The Jews,' he added, 'ought to be downright grateful to me.'⁶⁰

Rattled by the mounting global outrage over the pogrom, he called one hundred and fifty foreign journalists into his ministry at two-thirty P.M. The atmosphere was icy. 'Explained the whole thing to them,' he told his diary; but the journalists found him pasty, haggard, and ill at ease. 'You can't blame me for what happened,' he said. 'Why, I was in Munich...'⁶¹ He claimed that the Reich frowned upon such 'spontaneous' demonstrations—but that the wrath of the people this time had been too great to contain, and that the police could scarcely open fire on crowds with whom they sympathized. Shrugging off any personal responsibility he scoffed: 'If I, Dr Goebbels, had organized the demonstration, the result would have been very different.' To his listeners he seemed unconvincing, self-contradictory, and confused.⁶² (A few days later the foreign press corps howled with glee when Louis Lochner told a departing colleague, 'I think you will agree that our efficient secretary managed to organize a very fine *spontaneous* demonstration for you.'⁶³) Still unashamed, Goebbels drafted together with Hans Hinkel, head of

⊗ Det.
 Yes, he was
 so human
 we would
 never have
 put up with
 a client
 who was
 so lacking
 in any sense
 of embarrassment
 about himself.

Nov 11, 1938

the Jewish desk at his ministry, petty and repressive ordinances denying Jews access to all places of public entertainment henceforth. 'This takes the whole question a great step forward,' he congratulated himself.

WHILE Foreign Minister von Ribbentrop earned grudging praise for his handling of the protests abroad,⁶⁴ Dr Goebbels found himself a pariah in official Berlin. He had to seize and suppress all the foreign newspapers for several days.⁶⁵ Lutze entered in his diary: 'Much wailing provoked abroad, but even at home opinions sharply diverge.'⁶⁶ Rosenberg, who detected Goebbels' hand and no other behind the pogrom, shrewdly put the cost to the German economy at roughly two years' Winter Relief.⁶⁷ Goebbels however would brag that he had proved that the Jews could be eliminated from the economy, whatever Funk said to the contrary.⁶⁸

'Goebbels,' wrote one German diplomat, 'has seldom found less credibility than for his claim that a "spontaneous outburst of public rage" led to the violence.' Hess confirmed that in his view Goebbels was alone to blame.⁶⁹ He ordered the Gestapo and the party's courts to delve into the origins of the night's violence and turn the culprits over to the public prosecutors.⁷⁰ A top Nazi official advised Hess that there was 'nationwide antipathy to Goebbels.'⁷¹ Heydrich also blamed him. Himmler was furious that Goebbels had issued orders to his police force.⁷² 'The order was given by the Propaganda Directorate [R.P.L., i.e. Goebbels wearing his party hat],' minuted Himmler privately, 'and I suspect that Goebbels, in his craving for power, which I noticed long ago, and also in his empty-headedness, started this action just at a time when the foreign political situation is very grave.... When I asked the Führer about it, I had the impression that he did not know anything about these events.'⁷³ Many of Goebbels' colleagues wondered if he might be going mad. 'Is Goebbels losing touch with reality?' speculated one minister.⁷⁴

Rosenberg's damage estimate, a hundred million marks, was well short of the true cost of Goebbels' folly. The reality was that German insurance companies would have to pay out for the senseless damage, since most of the destroyed buildings were German-owned; even the plundered stocks were often German-owned, and merely sold by the Jews on commission. On November 11 Göring told all the other gauleiters that he would not tolerate any recurrences. He praised Karl Kaufmann and the others who had abstained from the public violence, and said he was going to insist that Hitler get rid of Goebbels.⁷⁵

At a Cabinet-level conference held the next morning at the air ministry building, Field Marshal Göring roared at Goebbels: 'What the *Public* needs is a bit more *Enlightenment!*'—an allusion to Goebbels' full title.⁷⁶ Repairing the plate-glass windows alone would cost Germany nearly five million marks in scarce foreign currency.⁷⁷ Goebbels afterward recorded, 'Heated arguments about the situation. I hold out for a radical viewpoint. Funk a bit weak and wobbly.' They agreed to levy a billion-mark (\$250 million) collective fine on the Jewish community for Rath's murder, and to take the remaining steps necessary to exclude the Jews from the

Mark
in 25
cents

German economy.⁷⁸ With once again less than total honesty Goebbels' diary continued, 'I am cooperating splendidly with Göring. He's going to crack down on them too. The radical line has won.' After drafting a strongly worded communiqué he commented for the *n*th time, 'This is one corpse that's going to cost the Jews a packet.'⁷⁹

He was unrepentant. Interviewed by Reuters chief correspondent Gordon Young that day he dismissed the pogrom as Germany's internal affair. As for the billion-mark fine, he said that the Jews' assets in Germany alone were eight times that figure. Future harmony would depend on their accepting their status in the Reich—'namely that of a foreign race whom we recognize to be antagonistic to the German people.'⁸⁰

Göring's criticism had sunk in. In working-class Wedding on the thirteenth Goebbels warned the proletariat in stern language to abstain from further *Aktionen* which would henceforth only damage their own economy.⁸¹ The wider damage had however already been done. Washington recalled the American ambassador.⁸² Foreign diplomats reported that Goebbels now outranked both Ribbentrop and Himmler in unpopularity.⁸³ This was not his own view. After rattling a Winter Relief collecting box outside the Hotel Adlon he recorded for posterity, 'I am very happy that the public loves me so much.'⁸⁴

LATE on November 15, 1938 Hitler finally returned to Berlin.⁸⁵ 'He's in fine fettle,' found Goebbels. 'Sharply against the Jews. Thoroughly endorses my, and our, policies.'⁸⁶ (A revealing self-correction—crossing out the original possessive adjective, *my*, would have been too obvious.)

All speculation among his fellow ministers about Goebbels' future was however now dispelled: In a public display of support Hitler escorted him to the formal reopening of the rebuilt Schiller Theater that evening, invited Goebbels and Magda to share his box, and stayed the night at Schwanenwerder with them.⁸⁷ They all talked until nearly three A.M. (Goebbels then blarneyed for five more hours with Magda). Hitler stayed over at their villa all the next day, conferring with his generals and ministers about the threat that Prague still posed.⁸⁸

Thus the public were to believe that Goebbels still enjoyed Hitler's favor. He resumed work on 'Hitler the Man,' his doomed biography. For an hour or two Hitler frolicked with the Goebbels children. 'All great plans are forged in one's youth,' he told their chastened but grateful father before leaving for Rath's state funeral in Düsseldorf, 'because you still have an imagination then.'

'I found that too,' remarked Goebbels in his diary.⁸⁹ For a while, he believed himself immortal again.

D. T.
Sometimes the
only object
that loves
him back,
ready to
serve as
his nurturer,
his selfless
care-giver
is his Diary.
In consequence,
rarely is there
a truthful
line in it.

like
Krausger's
sil mark.

1938-1939

33: On the Verge

NINETEEN thirty-eight has been a traumatic year for Dr Goebbels. As the New Year, 1939, is rung in he writes: 'I'd rather go hang myself.'¹ 'I have gained many gray hairs over the last year,' he will add a few weeks later.²

Denied marital comforts by Magda for months on end, he allows masculine frustration to overwhelm ministerial prudence. He invites a Miss U. to his study, offers routine pleasantries about her latest movie, presses a check for several thousand marks upon her, and invites her out one day—she assumes to a movie. His car picks her up after dark near the Kroll opera house. Miss U. nervously has her fiancé follow, but Goebbels' supercharged Mercedes soon shakes him off. Rach drives them out to Lanke. A cold buffet is waiting inside the villa. Seeing the piano, she mentions that she can play. He says that two can play, but when it appears that he has a different tune in mind she fends him off vigorously. Goebbels snaps: 'You must know whom you're dealing with. I'm one of the dozen most important men in Europe!' He drives her back to Berlin in a cold fury, and instructs Rach to halt before the end of the autobahn. 'The lady is alighting here,' he instructs.³ This victim immediately places herself at Magda's disposal.⁴

By early December 1938 the three-month probationary period is already forgotten. Magda tells her father, now a wealthy industrialist in Duisburg, that she has decided to leave Goebbels for good—perhaps even to emigrate. Her father welcomes her decision. Referring to the 'prevailing tense circumstances,' he assures her: 'Given recent events I agree more than ever with the decisions you tell me of. Be of good heart, my child. Your father has now grown even larger and more independent and you will always find with him, whether at home or abroad, a secure and financially adequate refuge for yourself and your children.'⁵

Goebbels is almost inured to these agonies. After speaking with Magda ('the same old melody') he falls seriously ill.⁶ Stomach X-rays reveal no organic disorder. The doctors diagnose nervous complications. He takes to his bed, and for the first time in fifteen years he writes no diary for two weeks.⁷ Professor Sauerbruch orders him into the La Charité hospital. Suspecting him of malingering, Magda makes a beeline for the Führer with fresh complaints about his behavior. When she visits the hospital it is just to bespatter him with more matrimonial bile. It is a fair assumption that there is a link between these reproaches and the anonymous large

bouquet that arrives for him. On his discharge he spends a lonesome Christmas at his citadel; his family are next door—they leave him lying there alone the whole evening. When Staatssekretär Hanke visits on official business, it is a frosty affair. A sympathetic letter from Funk cheers him up. Funk is one of the few people he can depend on. Funk, and the Führer. Hitler invites him down to the Obersalzberg. Before leaving, Dr Goebbels tries one more approach to Magda, but she launches into more 'speculations,' and he rushes off yelping. 'I don't know her any more,' he laments.⁸

Once again he is relegated to the guesthouse. 'I live here in splendid isolation,' he writes, making a virtue out of his humiliation. Hitler invites him up to the Berghof for some blunt talking. 'I shall pass over the details here,' writes Goebbels bleakly. The plain speaking continues for four hours the next day. When Hitler leaves for Berlin Goebbels stays on at the Obersalzberg to convalesce. He is at breaking point. 'From Berlin'—he writes Berlin but means Magda—'I hear not a word. Not that I want to anyway.'⁹ 'It's just that I can't sleep at night. Then comes the anger, and the rage, and the hate.'¹⁰

Max Amann breaks to him the bad news that Hitler has forbidden publication of Goebbels' biography of him. Used only to censoring others, Goebbels finds it a bitter blow.¹¹ Later he will concede that Hitler was right, the manuscript was just a hasty pot-boiler.¹² Returning to Berlin on Thursday January 17, 1939 he realizes: 'I am on the verge of a nervous breakdown.'¹³ Seeing Hitler at midday he talks about everything other than what's really on his mind. The next afternoon he ventures out to Schwanenwerder, ostensibly to see the children; he stays at the citadel. By the next day he and Magda have reached an unusual agreement, brokered by Hitler.¹⁴ Goebbels will sign a document binding him to one year's good behavior. Magda agrees to remain outwardly his wife meanwhile, after which she can divorce him if she wishes. He may appear at Schwanenwerder only by prior invitation.¹⁵ (It is precisely the kind of matrimonial truce that Goebbels himself had proposed during the divorce-law discussions in Cabinet two years before.)¹⁶ Hitler offers to act as guarantor.

For two hours the two men stroll around Speer's new chancellery building, talking this irksome affair over. To allow it to consume so much of his time Hitler must have a monumental patience, or a real and enduring fondness for Magda. Her draft of the agreement seems very businesslike. Hitler runs his eye over it and suggests a few minor changes. They all sign it at Schwanenwerder on January 22—the only peace treaty to which Hitler will ever set his name.¹⁷ 'The best thing will be for you to live like a monk,' he tells the minister. 'And you, madam, should live like a nun.' 'Mein Führer, I have been living like a nun for a year already,' she retorts, Goebbels persuades Hitler to write a certain letter to her—it has not survived—and hopes the affair is closed.¹⁸ It has obscured his entire horizon for months.

Their strained marriage is the whisper of all Germany. Scandalized

scene -

17

How jealous
Hitler
had been
of Goebbels.

2 *

Febr. 6, 1939

travelers say he has twenty-three illegitimate children.¹⁹ Foreign newspapers report that he has been dismissed, and that he is to answer charges before a Nazi tribunal about his private life. They remark on his absence from a dinner for foreign journalists.²⁰ 'Aggravation upon aggravation,' records Goebbels. 'And I've got to swallow hard.' 'There's no end to the rumors and scuttlebutt,' he adds the next day. 'I'm suffering agonies.'²¹ An official informs Hanke that even the charwomen are talking about the minister in the 'most contemptuous' terms.²² Himmler tells Rosenberg at this time that Magda has complained of 'dozens' of infidelities by her husband. 'The women are now lining up to dictate affidavits—both for Mrs G. and for the Gestapo—on how he coerced them,' says Himmler. 'I've handed some of these statements to the Führer.' Unusually well-informed, Himmler adds that in October Magda has given her husband three months to come to heel; in January the time is up.²³

It has taxed even Hitler's powers of persuasion to induce Magda to return to the conjugal home, reports one major fleeing Germany, to British officers.²⁴ Grimly, she fulfills her new contractual obligations. The photographers capture pictures of her at the press ball, sitting blank-faced and embittered at her unloved husband's side.²⁵

'GOEBBELS,' commented Rosenberg with satisfaction on February 6, 'has no friends. Even his hirelings curse him.' Some Nazis felt that he had harmed their movement by his personal behavior and the crudity of his propaganda. One Hitler Youth leader remarked that 'nobody' approved of his anti-Jewish measures.²⁶ He had regimented and punished, censored and sanitized the media to the consistency of a bland brown pudding, then criticized their lack of individuality. The newsreels were uniformly dull, featuring their beloved Führer so often that even he complained.²⁷ Lively, thinking newspapers were suppressed, while Streicher's loathsome organ *Der Stürmer* appeared unmolested.²⁸ Even popular writers like Hans Grimm were called before Goebbels to be screamed at, for not ending letters with 'Heil Hitler' and for not attending the Weimar literary convention. 'If you don't toe the line I'll break you,' shouted Goebbels, 'whatever the wailing from abroad. Just as I broke Furtwängler. I throw writers like you into concentration camp for four months—and the next time after that they never get out again.'²⁹ He censored the latest dance steps, and found nothing absurd in erecting enamel plates in dance halls reading 'Jazz dancing forbidden.'³⁰ Just once he professed to see the funny side of foreign caricatures of himself.³¹ More often he reacted viciously. He took the usual steps to neutralize the acid of political satire. Oblivious of how ludicrous he seemed, he entered pompously in his diary: 'Cranked up the prohibition machinery against the Kabarett der Komiker.'³² He expelled five of its comedians from the chamber of culture, while announcing a joke contest to prove that the Reich had not lost its sense of humor.³³ In March he paid a surprise visit to the cabaret, found it packed and totally non-political. 'So it works. You only need to a firm hand to get your own way.'³⁴

Power had corroded his sense of proportion. He had become more corrupt than the most gluttonous Jewish magnates of his popular invective. At taxpayers' expense he was yet again remodeling his official residence. It was scheduled for completion by July 15, 1939. Its household staff of eighteen would be paid for from his ministry's secret fund.³⁵ He had installed a private apartment in his ministry. He had the sole use for life of the villa on the Bogensee lake at Lanke. He owned outright two luxury properties on the exclusive Schwanenwerder lakeshore. At the nadir of his nervous breakdown in January 1939 he still found the strength to order work to begin on a palatial mansion on the far side of the Bogensee, fencing off a total of 3,200 hectares (eight thousand acres) of woodland in one of Berlin's favorite beauty spots.³⁶ Together with Hanke, whose sins he had evidently forgiven, Goebbels paced off the new site and observed incongruously in his diary, 'At least I'll have one place to call home.'³⁷ His private architect Hugo Bartels promised to have this new refuge ready for his birthday in October 1939. By May, 129 men were laboring on this new Haus am Bogensee. Even after the war broke out construction would continue at the same pace. A letter from Bartels hints at some of the amenities that Goebbels was installing—including a wine cellar and unheard of luxuries like an air-conditioned beer cellar and a refrigerated pastry-cooling table.³⁸ 'It's going to be beautiful,' he wrote after working on the blueprints, 'but unfortunately a bit expensive. It's laid out on a generous scale, and meant to last a lifetime.'³⁹ The Haus am Bogensee would ultimately have a small guest-house, a private cinema, and five bedrooms, including separate rooms for Goebbels and Magda. The architects had provided air conditioning, a disappearing bar, and a large picture window which sank with a faint whir into the floor at the touch of a brass button.⁴⁰ The inventory of furnishings would fill twenty-eight pages of single-spaced typescript.

The average Berliner probably knew none of this. To ingratiate himself with them he put on his old trenchcoat on November 28, 1938, and made heavily publicized visits to slum-dwellings while reporters took down every word for publication in *Angriff* two days later. 'Heil Hitler, Mrs B—!' he exclaimed. 'Might I look at your apartment for a moment?' 'This man is to have a new apartment, Wächter! Take this down. . . .' He allocated two million marks to slum clearance from the fine levied on the Jews.⁴¹

In a raucous speech to Berlin propaganda workers on November 22 he claimed proof that the Jews had planned the Gustloff and Rath murders long in advance; and, as for the alleged plundering during the pogrom, the reality had been different: Markgraf, the famous jewelers, had not been plundered at all, he said, but had concealed their stock in a nearby hotel 'for safety.' (The next day he told the same to Hitler, who laughed out loud.)⁴² When a British member of parliament suggested resettling Germany's Jews in Britain, Goebbels maliciously applauded: 'I expect it will be a great satisfaction for the British people to assist the much respected Jews from their tremendous financial resources.' That

Spring 1939

was the problem, he noted: everybody wanted to help the Jews out—but nobody wanted them.⁴³

At a secret ministerial conference a few weeks later, the stenographic record quotes him as saying:

It is immaterial how the Jewish problem is actually solved, perhaps by denoting some region of the globe later on for the creation of a Jewish state. But it is remarkable that the states whose public opinion is in favor of the Jews all refuse to accept our Jews from us. They say they are magnificent pioneers of culture, and geniuses in economics, diplomacy, philosophy, and poetry, yet the moment we try to press one of these geniuses upon them, they clamp down their frontiers: 'No, no! We don't want them!' I think it must be unique in the history of the world, people turning down geniuses.⁴⁴

Goebbels set up an institute to research the Jewish problem and flood the media with pseudo-scientific articles.⁴⁵ 'We're gradually crowding the Jews together,' he recorded. 'This will release space for the German workers.'⁴⁶

LENI Riefenstahl, returning from Hollywood, confirmed that the Jews were everywhere there.⁴⁷ Although he secretly enjoyed watching American movies like Walt Disney's *Snow White* with his family, he forbade their general release both to save foreign currency and to get his own back for the American-Jewish boycott of Germany's films.⁴⁸ He assiduously pandered to Hitler's lowbrow film tastes, giving him eighteen Mickey Mouse cartoons for Christmas 1937.⁴⁹ The Führer demanded a copy of the Sherlock Holmes thriller *The Hound of the Baskervilles* as a permanent loan to his film library.⁵⁰ His obiter dicta on films had the force of law even for Goebbels. *Tarzan* was bad, *Woman at the Wheel* was very bad; and he walked right out of *Madame Dubarry*.⁵¹ Goebbels intervened at every level of film production, personally editing *In the Name of the People* and the latest Veit Harlan movie *Immortal Heart*, and ordering key scenes of *Hotel Sacher* shot again.⁵² He put sound financial brains in charge of the major studios, with capable artistic directors like Emil Jannings at Ufa, Demandowsky at Tobis, Hans Schweikart at Bavaria, Karl Hartl at Tobis-Sascha, and Alfred Greven, a world-war fighter pilot, at Terra.⁵³ (It was around Greven that his next major personal crisis would revolve.)

UPSET by the estrangement from Magda and preoccupied with the financial crisis that he had inflicted on himself by his extravagant new plans for Lanke, Goebbels brooded far into the spring of 1939.

Max Amann had invited him to write an article each week for the *Völkischer Beobachter*. Putting on his eyeglasses, he dictated an effortless diatribe against the United States.⁵⁴ Brilliantly composed and elegantly argued these articles would flow like a river of strychnine over the next five years. Usually he hit upon their titles before actually writing the contents.⁵⁵ The articles betrayed his newfound mistrust of the British, in

line with Hitler's reluctant acceptance that war with Britain was now inevitable.⁵⁶ He did not doubt, he wrote, that the British would defend their way of life to the utmost—they would fight to the last Frenchman, the last Russian, and the last American, if need be.⁵⁷

938 } NEITHER he nor Hitler knew for sure what to do next. Opening the Sudeten election campaign at Reichenberg on November 19 Goebbels, mimicking Hitler's favorite argument, had said, 'When one has the feeling that the time is ripe, that the Goddess of History is descending on Earth, and that the hem of her mantle is touching mankind, then responsible men must have the courage to grasp the hem and not let go.'⁵⁸ For a few days in December the possibility of wresting Memel, Germany's ancient port on the Baltic, from Lithuanian control again surfaced.⁵⁹ Goebbels damped down speculation. Addressing the Reichstag at the end of January Hitler warned the international Jewish community against provoking a new world war.⁶⁰ He told Goebbels that he planned to think over his next moves at the Berghof. 'Perhaps,' speculated Goebbels, 'it's the Czechs' turn again.'⁶¹ Going for the Ukraine next would require Polish complicity. At lunch two days later Hitler was still preoccupied with foreign policy decisions. 'He is hatching new plans again,' observed Goebbels. 'A real Napoleon!'⁶² The propaganda minister headlined his next article, 'Is war in sight?' In it he fulminated against the British *News Chronicle*—he shortly expelled its Berlin correspondent Ian Colvin. He railed at the communists in New York, at the *Times* correspondent in Washington, at President Roosevelt, and at the BBC's German service. Germany, he insisted, desired nothing but peace.⁶³

Goebbels tried hard to restore his damaged image over the coming year. On the other side of town, Magda let down her hair, modernized her hairstyle, wore make-up, partied, and drank.⁶⁴ Goebbels importuned her by phone to join him at the occasional official function, but she rarely did. Early in March he noted without comment that she was busy getting ready for a trip to Italy.⁶⁵ Albert Speer had invited her, traveling under an assumed name, to join several other couples including Hitler's surgeon Karl Brandt touring southern Italy and Sicily, and they left Berlin on the evening of March 9.

THE very next day the Nazis' months of subversion in Slovakia paid off. For weeks since Munich Hitler's agents had been fomenting discord there. Slovakia declared herself independent from Prague. On the tenth Prague sent in troops to arrest the Slovak prime minister Father Tiso. This was the opportunity Hitler wanted, to 'solve the problem we left half-solved in October,' as Goebbels put it. Springing into action Hitler sent for Goebbels at midday and for Ribbentrop and Keitel soon after. He told them he had decided to march in to the rest of the hybrid Czech state on Wednesday the fifteenth and seize Prague. 'Our frontier must extend to the Carpathians,' Goebbels penned into his hitherto unpublished diaries: 'The Ides of March.'

March 11, 1939

We fix all the details already. We are after all well versed in this now. I recall Berndt and Bömer [domestic and foreign press department heads] from leave. . . . We're all very pleased, even Ribbentrop. The Führer shouts with joy. This is going to be a pushover. We'll start broadcasting Slovakian bulletins from our [black] Vienna transmitter. I'll turn the volume up over the next three days to full blast. . . . In the afternoon I work out the battle plan on my own. I think it's going to be another masterpiece of strategy and diplomacy.

Late in the afternoon over to the Führer again. We infer from one report that before its arrest the Tiso regime appealed in despair to the German government. The actual text can always be obtained later. The Führer says, and rightly so, that you can't make history with lawyers. You've got to have heart, head, and courage—just what lawyers lack. In the evening, at my suggestion, the Führer visits the People's Theater to put up a façade.

Afterward he sat sipping tea with Hitler until four A.M. in the Artistes' Club—'We have our alibi,' wrote Goebbels, ignoring the word's criminal connotations. Upsetting Hitler's cynical plot, Tiso refused to sign the appeal for German help that Hitler had sent him. The steam was going out of the plan.⁶⁶ Next day Berndt reported in, and Goebbels jokingly appointed the thickset, burly Nazi propagandist his 'Reich Rumormonger.' It was the Sudeten crisis all over again.

That evening, March 11, he viewed several films, including *The Sweetheart*, starring Lida Baarova, a 'wonderful, poetic and moving love story' which deeply upset him; he drove out to Lanke to sleep it off amid the snow and ice of a winter that had suddenly arrived.⁶⁷ (He had not seen Lida since, allegedly, she had abruptly materialized before him, mischievously disguised in a wig, at a Winter Relief collection.⁶⁸) The news during the night from Bratislava, Slovakia's capital, was distressingly calm. With the activists in jail, the momentum had gone. 'The attempt to whip things up with our S.S. has only partly succeeded. It looks as if Slovakia's not playing along,' noted Goebbels in disappointment. Moreover Prague too was refusing to be provoked this time. 'So we're going to make history there ourselves,' noted Goebbels. He discussed the psychological aspects with Hitler at midday on the twelfth; they decided to keep the crisis out of the editorials, the press must wear an impenetrable mask until Wednesday, the day itself. 'If only we had . . . an appeal for aid or military intervention' lamented Goebbels. 'That would make it all so simple.' All day long the messengers scurried between his ministry and Hitler's chancellery, while the Berlin public had not an inkling of what was brewing.⁶⁹ That night, after another 'alibi' visit to an operetta, Goebbels and Hitler stayed up until three A.M. talking foreign policy. Ribbentrop, recorded Goebbels afterward, 'takes the view that there's bound to be a conflict with Britain later. The Führer is preparing for it, but he does not consider it inevitable. . . . There is a heated argument.'⁷⁰

Still the foreign press acted as though nothing was happening. Early

next morning, Monday March 13, Hitler sent for Goebbels to agree on leaflets for the invasion. While Goebbels, back at his ministry, drafted the wording—'any resistance will be bloodily put down'—his children came for half an hour to rumster around, an idyll on the irony of which he himself commented. That afternoon Germany's newspapers suddenly opened fire, roaring with one voice a broadside of rage at Prague. 'Berndt . . . is the best man for such jobs,' Goebbels recognized. 'Now the cat is out of the bag.' London and Paris expressed disinterest in Prague's fate.

Over to the Führer in the evening. He has received Tiso. Explained to him that Slovakia's historic hour has come. If they don't act they'll be swallowed up by Hungary. He is to think it over and go back to Bratislava. No revolutions, it must all be constitutional and above board. Not that we expect very much from him. But that doesn't matter now.

The Führer goes over his plan once more. Within five days the whole operation will be over. On the first day we'll already be in Prague. Our planes within two hours in fact. I think we'll pull it off without significant bloodshed. And then the Führer intends to take a lengthy political breather. Amen! I can't believe it, it's too good to be true.⁷¹

The next morning, March 14, Tiso persuaded his Slovak parliament to declare independence from Prague, but 'not, as at first reported, with an appeal to Berlin for aid.' The Slovaks wanted no German troops. 'Our press,' wrote Goebbels, 'rampages just like last September.' London and Paris still kept well out: 'Once bitten, twice shy!' was his assessment. He had printed twenty-five million leaflets overnight. At midday Hitler discussed with him the new statute for Bohemia and Moravia, as Prague's territories would be styled. ('We order that the name Czechoslovakia is not to be used any more,' noted Goebbels, ordering swift research to back up Germany's historic claim to these regions. 'We shall speak of Bohemia and Moravia as ancient German territories.')

They would be left largely to govern themselves. 'The Czechs will not be germanized, but will enjoy the protection of the Reich's military, foreign, and economic policies.' Hitler told him the Wehrmacht would cross the frontier at six A.M. No sooner had Goebbels predicted that the Czechs would come cap in hand than they did just that. Emil Hacha, Benes' successor, arranged to come by special train to Berlin immediately. 'Meanwhile we have the first troops move into Czech territory. So Hacha can see what's what.' S.S. units stealthily crossed into Moravian Ostrau and Witkowitz, to prevent the Poles seizing the steel mills there; resistance in two places was quickly broken. Hacha arrived with his foreign minister from Prague that evening. 'The Führer,' recorded his admiring propaganda minister, 'has them wait until midnight, slowly and surely wearing them out. That's what they did with us at Versailles. The tried and tested methods of political tactics.'

The tension mounts as we all wait for the outcome of their talks. . . .

March 16, 1939

Once Hacha collapses in a faint, then they surrender all down the line. They accept more than we ever dreamed possible. And unconditionally. Order their own troops not to offer any resistance.

Hitler dictated a proclamation, which Goebbels himself read out over the microphones to a sleeping Germany at six A.M.⁷² When the minister awoke three hours later Hitler had already left to join his troops. In his pocket he carried the new statute for Bohemia and Moravia, and for the Protectorate that he was to establish over this supine neighbor. By evening the entire region had been occupied, a masterpiece of military organization as Goebbels himself noted.

That evening, as Hitler took up residence in the Czech Hradcany castle, Goebbels felt suddenly very lonely: 'I feel a longing for human beings.' He went over to filmstar Zarah Leander's little birthday party for distraction.⁷³ On March 16 he issued an edict: 'The use of the term "Grossdeutsches Reich" is not desired. This term is reserved for later eventualities.' He began to plan an Easter journey across the Balkans and Greece. That evening he went out for another little drive—after all, Magda was a thousand miles away.

WHILE Magda had gallivanted off for six weeks late on March 9, 1939 Goebbels enjoyed unrestricted access to their children. Sometimes he brought them into his ministry and let them tumble around his study.⁷⁴ Still pursuing Magda, his Staatssekretär Hanke meanwhile addressed love letters to her at every station of her journey.

Late on Tuesday the twenty-first, Goebbels again escorted his Führer to the theater on his return to Berlin. This time they had to camouflage their next move, a crude ultimatum which Ribbentrop was at that moment issuing to Lithuania over Memel. 'These petty crooks of Versailles,' chuckled Goebbels, 'are now having to hand back their loot.' As they waited for word from Lithuania, Hitler outlined his next plans to Goebbels—first he would take that respite, to regain people's confidence; and then he would raise the question of Germany's former colonies. 'Always the old one-two,' marveled Goebbels. At six-thirty A.M. Lithuania agreed to relinquish Memel at once. It all seemed so easy: Goebbels realized that this was a dangerous notion that he would soon have to counteract.⁷⁵

Yes, as months went there definitely was something about March. After staging a triumphal entry into Memel aboard the battle-cruiser Deutschland on March 23, Hitler talked in confidence with Goebbels again. 'What a week that was,' wrote Goebbels. Could Hitler pull off the hat-trick and recover Danzig too—the former German port that the League of Nations had unwisely placed under partial Polish control after the world war? 'He's going to try out a little pressure on the Poles,' wrote Goebbels, 'and he hopes they'll respond to that. But we're going to have to swallow the bitter pill and guarantee Poland's other frontiers. It will all be decided very soon.'⁷⁶

RIBBENTROP played their opening gambit. He told the Polish ambassador Josef Lipski that Hitler's offer of a deal at Slovakia's expense was still open, provided that Danzig was returned to Germany. On the twenty-fifth Hitler reassured General von Brauchitsch, his new army commander, that he did not intend to use force against Poland.⁷⁷ He really did expect a deal, and the navy drafted plans for Hitler to enter Danzig in triumph aboard the Deutschland in a few days' time.⁷⁸ Over lunch he said that Poland was still making up her mind. 'We're stepping up the pressure,' wrote Goebbels—impatiently, because both men were planning their vacations, Goebbels in the Mediterranean and Hitler in Bavaria.

Poland however would not play ball. Reports soon reached Hitler that Warsaw had partially mobilized. Ambassador Lipski arrived back on the twenty-sixth and brusquely warned Ribbentrop that if Hitler still demanded Danzig it would mean war. 'The Polacks,' observed Goebbels in disgust, 'will always be our natural enemies, however keen in the past they have been, out of pure self-interest, to do us the odd favor.'

He set out by train, taking a private secretary and three senior colleagues on the first leg of his vacation.⁷⁹

April 14, 1939

34: Put Poland on Page Two

SEEN in retrospect those last days of March 1939 were the cradle of the coming war, but Dr Goebbels' diary betrayed no awareness of the solemnity of the hour. Seeking relief from his matrimonial dolours, he was off, visiting Budapest, Athens, and Rhodes.¹ In Budapest he was received by the prime minister, foreign minister, and minister of education.² In Athens, though formally the guest of the mayor, he again visited Prime Minister Metaxas. The Greeks informed the British that Goebbels had told Metaxas that Hitler was not planning any further move 'for the moment.'³ In Athens, he learned belatedly that Poland was still holding out over Danzig. 'If the fat hits the fire the Führer will recall me,' he decided, and traveled on.⁴ In Rhodes he read that Chamberlain had guaranteed Poland against any aggression.* Several more British guarantees followed to other states on Germany's periphery. 'Britain on the path of virtue,' Goebbels scoffed. 'What a hoot!'⁵ He flew on to Egypt, shadowed by British agents wherever he went.⁶

Egypt impressed him. 'Seldom in my life,' he wrote, seeing the Sphinx for the first time, 'has a sight so moved me. Normally one feels cheated. Here, reality surpasses what one had imagined.'⁷ He told the German community that he had not come with pots of gold for propaganda. Germany, he said, again faithfully representing Hitler's policies, had no interest in the Mediterranean, and was 'now fully occupied' digesting the territories she had recently acquired.⁸ At this range, it seemed only a small fly in the ointment that Warsaw and London had signed a formal pact. 'One day, perhaps,' he mused, 'Poland will have to pay very dear for this.' Czechoslovakia had, after all, made the same mistake.⁹

After a brief stopover in Turkey¹¹ he landed back at Tempelhof on April 14 and swapped travel anecdotes with Magda, who had returned from her own travels, at Schwanenwerder that evening. As for foreign affairs he told the diary nothing. Metaxas had speculated that Goebbels was somewhat out of favor.¹² Hitler was certainly in little hurry to take him further into his confidence; four days passed before they next met.

*Except, it turned out, aggression by the Soviet Union; a secret addendum made this clear. It was Ian Colvin of the *News Chronicle*, whom Goebbels expelled a few days later, who tilted the balance to war by telling Chamberlain, untruthfully, on March 29 that Hitler had already drawn up plans to destroy Poland. However the contingency plan (Hitler's Case White) was now activated as a *result* of the British guarantee.¹⁰

On April 18, after gathering with his family and Magda for his mother's seventieth birthday ('she's the one fixture in this stormy life of mine') Goebbels was among those dining with Hitler. Göring was also there, bronzed and fit from a vacation at San Remo; he would recall Hitler revealing at this dinner his determination to solve the Danzig question by force if necessary. Goebbels noted in his diary only the words, 'We talked politics a bit.'¹³

He was swamped in the preparations for Hitler's grandiose fiftieth-birthday parade. On the evening of the nineteenth he broadcast a special birthday tribute, then went immediately afterward over to the chancellery to join the leading party officials assembled in the ceremonial rooms overlooking Hermann-Göring Strasse. Hitler appeared an hour late, white-faced, as though he had received bad news. Speaking softly and deliberately, he indicated that he had just had a medical check-up; building on that remark, he added that he could not say how many years he still had in which to achieve his life's ambition.¹⁴ He spoke specifically of the grave risks that he was prepared now to take.¹⁵

More recently retrieved fragments of Goebbels' hitherto unpublished diary throw further shafts of light on the development of Hitler's plans. 'England wants to mend her fences with us again,' Goebbels wrote after lunch with Hitler on the twenty-third. 'Chamberlain has already put out feelers to us. With France we won't have too much difficulty. And Poland is none too comfortable in its policy toward us. But for the time being the Führer doesn't want to repeat his former offer to them on Danzig and the autobahn through the Corridor,' a reference to his offer to settle for an extra-territorial freeway across the Polish territories to East Prussia.¹⁶

Over the next two weeks Hitler briefed him about Case White (war with Poland 'if need be'). On May 1 Goebbels wrote: 'The Poles are agitating violently against us. The Führer welcomes it. We are not to hit back for the time being, but to take note. Warsaw will end up one day the same way as Prague.'¹⁷ Two days later he ordered all editors to go easy on the Soviet Union 'until further notice.'¹⁸ His next *Völkischer Beobachter* leader article was widely seen as flinging down the gauntlet to Poland.¹⁹

Presumably with his Führer's approval Goebbels now made Britain his prime target. Speaking without notes in Cologne on May 19 he blasphemed against the democracies, calling them 'old whores' turned sacrimonious nuns in their old age. 'For one like myself,' reported a local British diplomat, 'who had not heard Goebbels before, the power of his voice was a revelation, coming as it does from such a puny body.'²⁰ The Italian foreign minister came to Berlin to sign a military pact with Germany. At the dinner for Count Ciano Hitler told Goebbels that he had fought twenty years for this.²¹

Preparing Germany for war, Goebbels speeded up work on the cable radio network, to release conventional transmitter capacity; he wrote Hitler a letter urging him to cut the red tape on this project.²² His ministry

May 19, 1939

PUT POLAND ON PAGE TWO 295

was also building some of the biggest transmitters in the world. The new half-megawatt Deutschland-Sender went on the air on May 19; later, it was to be stepped up to five megawatts. Goebbels was also building four high-powered shortwave transmitters near Hamburg. He wanted the world to hear his voice.²³

He put the cunning and unscrupulous Berndt in charge of this expanding broadcasting network. Berndt had by now, as he himself admitted to Himmler, the unsavory reputation of being in charge of all the dirty tricks necessary in the Nazis' interests—'subversion of the enemy, creating the starting points for political operations, and so forth.'²⁴ His propaganda fictions had paved the way for Munich. In Berndt's place as inland press chief Goebbels appointed Hans Fritzsche, an impressive intellectual with an educated drawl. Both men held high S.S. rank. Both were party veterans, with the kind of radicalism that Goebbels applauded—Berndt would shoot an American airman in cold blood; Fritzsche would turn over to the Gestapo's hangmen a simple Nuremberg fireman who sent him a crude paste-up montage as a one-man protest in 1941.²⁵

UNEXPECTEDLY the Lida Baarova case returns to haunt Goebbels that spring. Fleeing Germany, she has returned to her native Prague, only to find Hitler's troops invading in March and herself trapped again within the Reich's frontiers. She returns to Berlin. Several times in recent weeks Goebbels has asked Hilde Körber about Lida's well-being; he meets Hilde in the woods, terrified of being followed—once he shows her a pistol he is carrying—and sends her over to Lida with messages (Lida never replies). Touched by his concern, Hilde writes little poems to him. Sitting in the dress-circle once, Lida sees him at a distance, but their eyes do not meet. Emil Jannings and others come to plead with Goebbels to allow Lida to film again. He replies, 'It is out of my hands.'²⁶

Then Alfred Greven, now general manager of Ufa, secretly signs her up again. Goebbels blurts out to him: 'But Baarova is banned by the Führer!' The film boss urges him to lift the ban since so much time has elapsed. 'She can be hired as far as I am concerned,' says Goebbels, softening, 'but I don't think it will be possible. I must talk it over with Hanke.'

Hanke however cannot let bygones be bygones. He still has a covetous eye on the minister's sorely wronged spouse. Storming into Greven's office on May 19 he reminds him of the filmstar's notorious affair with 'higher circles.'

'Herr Staatssekretär,' retorts Greven, 'what about your own little affair?'²⁷ It seems that everybody knows about Magda.

Hanke swings a punch at Greven—'because,' as he writes at once to Himmler, 'he countered my allegations with a blatant untruth.'²⁸ Hitler orders Hanke to report to him.

Aghast at this new episode, Goebbels writes in his unpublished diary, 'By his unpardonable assault on Greven of Ufa, Hanke has touched off

Scene

a hideous scandal. I am furious. Was that the intent? One doesn't know whom to trust. It's left to me now to try and sort things out. Will I ever manage to get clear of all these *Schweinereien*?²⁹ For days the Greven affair clouds his diary's horizon. 'It's sickening. One rumor after another.'³⁰ Greven retaliates, writing to him as gauleiter and demanding a full hearing by the party court. 'He's stirring things up against Hanke now.'³¹

On May 17, Mother's Day, the Berlin *Illustrated* publishes a cover portrait of Magda and a family group photo—without Dr Goebbels. Although an operation on Helga's throat brings them momentarily closer together, the matrimonial stand-off continues.³² He plays with the children and regales them with bedtime stories of Germany's decline and resurgence; his little treasures 'listen with gleaming eyes.'³³ One day he takes the ministry staff on three boats across the Wannsee to Schwanenwerder to shout a big hallo to Magda and the children.³⁴ A couple of days later he gives her a new car (followed by one of the first Volkswagens for the children).³⁵ Magda however has however begun a clean sweep. She sells off the next-door plot, Nos 12 to 14 Insel Strasse ('the so-called citadel'), which has brought her so much unhappiness, and in June she is on the point of selling her present plot too, to buy an even more beautiful site a few houses further down the road.³⁶ The house needs total renovation. 'It will probably take a few months to finish,' she writes to her father Oskar Ritschel. 'I'm looking forward to the job ahead as it will distract me from the more or less grim thoughts that my fate, indeterminate as it is, still provokes in me.' She will take the children to Bad Gastein in Austria for the summer, where her father, no admirer of the minister's, can visit them in privacy.³⁷

That summer the Berlin *Illustrated* also published comparative photos of Goebbels' study together with the fantasy version crafted by a Hollywood studio for the film *Confessions of a Nazi Spy*. The American studio version showed 'Goebbels' seated behind a ten-foot-wide desk in front of an eleven-foot Hitler painting, with two huge swastikas embossed in the marble floor. In reality the portrait was six foot tall, and of Frederick the Great; a large globe however dominated the room—and his desk still measured ten feet across.³⁸

MEANWHILE Goebbels methodically stoked up the propaganda fires over Danzig, releasing the steam in carefully controlled bursts. Via teleprinter and telephone, editors were told what stories to print and how—how much leeway was allowed, how big the headline should be.³⁹ 'The [Berlin] press,' an American observer would report to Washington that summer, drawing on the experience of the previous year, 'passes through set stages of invective in preparation for each of the major incidents which have so far occurred.' The first stage, he explained, merely set forth in general terms the German point of view. Secondly, there followed attacks on the foreign government in question. Thirdly, the press attack switched to the 'acts of terror' allegedly perpetrated against the German people by these

governments. The fourth and final stage of this cycle, he said, was marked by 'lurid tales of German blood being spilled.' This officer pointed out that the process had begun anew in May 1939, with asseverations of Germany's historic right to Danzig.⁴⁰

This analysis was correct. From May onwards Goebbels had lifted the ban on reporting anti-German incidents in Poland, though restricted for the time being to page two.⁴¹ To imprint Danzig's character firmly on the world's mind as a German city, in June Hitler authorized him to deliver a major speech there—a 'trial balloon,' Goebbels confidentially informed his editors, 'to test the international atmosphere on Danzig.'

With the local gauleiter Albert Forster he plotted a 'spontaneous'—how he loved and abused that word—display in Danzig to demonstrate to the foreign journalists traveling in his party the German character of the city and its people.⁴² He delivered the speech 'spontaneously' from the balcony of the Danzig state theater through loudspeakers which had no less spontaneously materialized. 'I am standing here on the soil of a German town,' he emphasized, motioning to the architectural icons all around. 'You long to return to the Reich,' he intoned. The thousands of well-drilled young Nazis chanted in response, 'We want to see Hitler in Danzig!'⁴³ 'My speech,' Goebbels told his diary with a conspiratorial air, 'looked quite improvised but I had prepared the whole thing in advance.'⁴⁴ 'I know,' he said with a careless wink, speaking that evening at the Casino hotel at Zoppot, near Danzig, to the foreign journalists who had accompanied him, 'that some of you are curious whether today's demonstration was truly spontaneous or not.' In fact their Berlin colleagues had received the text in advance, and it had already been typeset for a special Sunday edition of the party's Danzig newspaper the day before.⁴⁵

At this meeting with the journalists Goebbels lamented that there would have been no problem if the British had not butted in with their 'absurd' guarantee to Poland. 'Morally, the right to Danzig is ours,' he argued. 'Just as we had a moral right to everything else we have taken—with the exception,' he added as a disarming afterthought, 'of Bohemia and Moravia. But we had to take those to create a strategic frontier for ourselves.' The British were just bluffing, he suggested. Hitler's nerves would prove the stronger. 'We know for sure that the stupid English are too weak and too cowardly to get in our way.'⁴⁶

On June 20 Hitler summoned him to report on Danzig at the Berghof. He found the Führer sitting in the teahouse, eager to make prognoses:

Poland will offer resistance at first, but upon the first reverse she will pitifully collapse. The Czechs are more realistic. The Poles are quite hysterical and unpredictable.

London will leave Warsaw in the lurch. They're just bluffing. Got too many other worries. . . . The Führer says, and he's right, that Britain now has the most rotten government imaginable. There's no question of their helping Warsaw. They led Prague up the garden path as well.

This is proved by the files we have captured in the Czech foreign ministry.

His bellicose speech in Danzig had sounded alarm bells around the world. Ambassador von Hassell was not alone in wondering if it was the prelude to a solution of the Polish problem by brute force.⁴⁷ The British ambassador in Berlin heard that Hitler had ordered Goebbels to make the speech 'as [the] result of reports of castration of Germans in Poland.'⁴⁸ But even Henderson believed that Goebbels was deliberately playing down such incidents.

This was true: On June 23 the propaganda ministry ordered reports of Polish atrocities played down.⁴⁹ Goebbels forbade any discussion of Danzig as yet.⁵⁰ Even kite-flying items on Danzig printed by British newspapers were not to be picked up.⁵¹ He ordered the press to ignore specific belligerent and anti-German speeches by foreign statesmen, as well as foreign press items about German troop movements, induction of reservists, leave cancellations, and British naval maneuvers in the North Sea. He allowed reports about 'incidents in Poland [and] expropriations of German property,' but still subjected them to 'existing layout guidelines.' Page two was still prominent enough.⁵² He did however order to be emphasized all those news items which served to diminish Britain's prestige—her failing encirclement policy, her floundering negotiations with Moscow, her fumbling in Palestine, and her citizens' humiliation at the hands of Japanese troops in the Far East.⁵³ He made some exceptions: Lord Londonderry, a personal friend of Göring's, was to be spared, and Britain's military honor was not to be impugned.⁵⁴ He drafted a biting attack on Britain's encirclement efforts himself, but ordered his press to go easier on Britain, while still instructing editors not to overlook the twentieth anniversary of Versailles on June 28. 'The German people know only too well what our enemies would do to us if they got us in their power again.' 'So keep hammering it in—hold Britain up to contempt, depict her as baffled, mendacious, jumpy, and impotent.'⁵⁵

After touring the western fortifications Goebbels afterward sought to reassure the gauleiters and generals secretly assembled in a big Aachen hotel. 'Gentlemen,' he told them, 'there will be no war with England. Here is a letter from London which again confirms my opinion.'⁵⁶ The letter seemed to prove that the British were indeed bluffing. 'Believe me, gentlemen,' said Goebbels, folding away the letter, 'We're going to see things develop just like last time. A war of nerves without parallel, I agree, but they'll end up giving in.'⁵⁷ Nobody was eager to die for Danzig.

Hitler was now shipping troops to East Prussia, bordering Danzig, under camouflage of the approaching anniversary of the battle of Tannenberg. Goebbels asked newspapers to mention the coming anniversary, though 'without special emphasis.'⁵⁸

Goebbels was confident that Hitler would pull it off with just propaganda again. Continuing his delicious feud, he often told Hitler that he had no confidence in Ribbentrop at all, and squabbled with the foreign

minister over the management of the visits of Count Ciano and the Yugoslav royal couple.⁵⁹ Once, in Vienna, Hitler had described Ribbentrop to Goebbels as bordering on insanity; when Goebbels told his diary that the man's prima-donna vanity got on his nerves he was telling the reader nothing that he had not long gathered already. Hitler even talked of getting rid of Ribbentrop.⁶⁰ To Goebbels' rage the London *Daily Express* published an accurate report on their feud.⁶¹ He revived it a few days later, sending Hanke to the Obersalzberg to wring from Hitler a declaration that radio, press, and even press attachés were his sole domain; Hitler humored his wish. Goebbels told his diary so often that Ribbentrop was demented that there is cause to question his own stability.⁶² When Ribbentrop took petty revenge on the press attachés, Goebbels got his own back by regaling Hitler at the Berghof with witticisms about this 'champagne dealer' and this 'would-be Bismarck' until tears of enjoyment ran down the Führer's face.⁶³ But the foreign ministry kept up its pressure on the press, and even a personal meeting between Ribbentrop and Goebbels, at which they sat facing each other with white knuckles and clenched teeth assuring each other of their desire for cordial relations, brought the matter no further. 'If he's as flexible as this in our foreign policy dealings,' wrote Goebbels, 'God help us.'⁶⁴

Hitler was conducting his own foreign policy that summer. Watching the reports from Moscow, he could see that the British negotiators were in difficulties, but, he told Goebbels, he could not deduce if Stalin was merely playing hard to get, holding out for a better price, or really intended to hold off altogether as Europe went to war, in order to scoop the pool at the end.⁶⁵ On June 10 Hitler confessed to Goebbels in Vienna that he was at a loss about what Moscow really wanted.⁶⁶ That he did not breathe a word to Goebbels about his secret overtures to Stalin is evident from the costly anti-Soviet movies to which several of Goebbels' film studios were still heavily committed.⁶⁷

Meanwhile Poland, bolstered by Britain's guarantee, remained intransigent—or insolent as Hitler and Goebbels saw it.⁶⁸ 'Poland,' said Hitler, 'is pursuing a very stupid political foreign policy. She won't be able to keep it up for long.' He mentioned that in August his own West Wall would be ready.⁶⁹

After supping with Hitler on July 4, Goebbels recorded that the Führer agreed with him they should nurture hatred against Britain—the German people must recognize her as their chief obstacle.⁷⁰

DURING July some British citizens took an initiative which caught Goebbels unawares. Commander Stephen King-Hall, a retired naval officer, started mailing to thousands of German addresses cleverly conceived letters attacking the top Nazis. Goebbels went to extraordinary lengths to answer these 'schoolboy essays.' When the first such letter came, he airily told Hitler that he would publish it in his own press—later a standard propaganda tactic—with a suitably juicy reply.⁷¹ His reply argued for example that their author, having served in the Royal Navy, had helped

starve to death hundreds of thousands of German women and children during the blockade; it recited every crime committed by the British empire-builders from the slave-trading history of Liverpool to the bombardment of Zanzibar. He also plotted an undefined 'masterpiece'—probably a fake letter in King Hall's name that was so absurd that nobody would believe him any more.⁷² 'We've got to work artfully,' he decided. 'But seemingly objectively.' The trouble was that Hitler announced that he wanted to see it first, and when Goebbels set out on July 8 on a prolonged journey to Austria he found Hitler who asked to see him at the Berghof still working on it.⁷³ 'Then we discuss top policy,' noted Goebbels, adding vaguely: 'We must wear down the Poles by further warlike preparations. At the decisive moment their nerves will crack. Britain will be worn down by ceaseless propaganda. And that's how we'll go on for the time being. There can scarcely be any doubt about the outcome.'⁷⁴

A second King-Hall letter turned up, but the Führer was still tinkering with the Goebbels reply to the first.⁷⁵ He did not finally release the reply until the fourteenth.⁷⁶ Goebbels ordered it printed in every German newspaper, but it was totally ignored by the British and French.⁷⁷ He was disappointed; he was sure he had hit home, but on the twentieth he noted that the incorrigible King-Hall was writing yet again.⁷⁸

*Dr. Goebbels' social
year along
trip from
celebrating
of wealth
and freedom
from
conquering
all the way
over to a
message as
own-shocked
in gold as
Goebbels's,*

ALMOST a landed gentleman now, a man of property like Göring, Goebbels is perceptibly less eager to risk war than the haggard, penniless agitator he had been in the late Twenties. He has a wife and family, although he has not seen much of Magda since the spring. She has taken her brood to holiday in the mountains at Bad Gastein on June 28, leaving him disconsolate, guilty, and lonely; alone, he drives out to Lanke to inspect progress on the lakeside mansion.⁷⁹ He learns that Hanke has stubbornly increased his emotional pressure on Magda throughout the year, even showing her a little lakeside house he has bought, No. 13 Gustav-Freytag Strasse, in the Grunewald. Reaching a sudden decision after seeing Hitler at the Berghof on July 8, Goebbels leaves at five p.m. and is with Magda and the children at seven. He is determined to force a total reconciliation with her.

'The children, the children!' he writes after reaching Gastein. 'They rejoice and dance, because Papa's arrived.' He jots proud little cameos of them in his diary—Helga points out the local landmarks, Hilde is a little mouse, Hellmut a clown, and Holde a darling little infant. The spectacular Alpine scenery and climate are made for romance. He goes for long walks with Magda, and sits far into the night with her under the starlit skies, drinking in the peaceful sounds of nature, and the steady rushing of the waterfall.⁸⁰ He sleeps ten hours and learns that Hitler is still tinkering with his reply to King-Hall, but all that is far away. He takes the family over to Zell am See and swaps nostalgic stories with Magda about the years before they came to power. They pore over architectural blueprints, play games with the children, go rambling in the mountains,

July 8 → 25, 1939

PUT POLAND ON PAGE TWO 301

and trundle back home in a pony cart.⁸¹ When he leaves Gastein the children cling to him with tear-stained faces and he suspects that Magda too is not unmoved.⁸²

He phones her on the sixteenth, and she joins him in Munich for the lavish, ornate, spectacular, and rain-soaked pageant of German Art.⁸³ Evidently she has told him something about her persistent suitor, because on the twentieth he has a 'serious row' with Hanke.⁸⁴ He visits his troubled wife again in Gastein and that evening she unbends to him. 'It's just as I thought,' snarls Goebbels in his diary. 'Hanke has turned out to be a first-class rotter. So my mistrust of him has been totally justified.' Magda, he decides, is on the horns of a terrible dilemma, and they talk all night about ways of escape. He stays in bed all the next day while she sits at his bedside talking softly with him. All the pieces are falling into place, and this alone brings him peace of mind.⁸⁵ He blames his Staatssekretär for everything, himself for nothing. 'Hanke is the most perfidious traitor I ever saw,' he writes grimly. 'But he's going to get his come-uppance.'⁸⁶ Magda agrees to accompany him to Bayreuth—scene of the previous year's opera scandal—on the twenty-fifth.

On July 25 Hanke sends a member of the ministry's staff to see Goebbels, evidently bearing a mixture of threats and entreaties; Goebbels is unimpressed and sends the man, G. W. Müller, back to Berlin with a flea for Hanke's ear.⁸⁷

On the way to Bayreuth Magda, still torn between the two men, faints several times; she is suffering from the nervous strain. At Bayreuth, Goebbels is phoned by Müller—'Has performed his job relatively well. A few more impudent threats and sentimentalities.' Magda is in tears, and Goebbels has difficulty calming her down.

Hitler has other problems on his hands. He is buoyant about his foreign policy. He says that the democracies will shrink back, step by step, from the brink of war.⁸⁸ Over dinner, he expands on this theme—that Warsaw will crumble if push comes to shove.⁸⁹

The next day, July 26, Magda is again wild-eyed and tearful. 'Every hour,' records Goebbels, 'alarming new bulletins come from [G. W.] Müller, from Speer, from Mama and the devil knows whom else. It's wrong even to pay any attention to them, they just get on your nerves.'⁹⁰ He has a long talk with Magda, he wants to help her but knows no way. That afternoon they sit once again through *Tristan and Isolde*, and Magda faints from the strain of it all. 'If only I could help her,' moans Goebbels. 'When shall we ever find a way out of all this misery?'

After supper he goes alone up to his room, unable to join in the general chatter. But when he emerges to fetch Magda, he finds her lying senseless on the staircase outside; he drags her into the room and revives her only with difficulty. Clearly there is something about Bayreuth that brings out the melodrama in some people. She murmurs only that she has confessed everything to the Führer; now they must stand together. Hitler tells Ribbentrop later that she is not fool enough to exchange 'Frau Reichsminister' for 'Frau Staatssekretär.' But the truth is that in a grim, almost

masochistic way she is beholden to Joseph and will remain his until the end. Folding her in his arms, he says: 'Magda, Hanke is not the man for you.' She promises to telephone her suitor to announce that she and her husband are reconciled.⁹¹ Goebbels witnesses the dialogue, an 'endless, tortured telephone conversation.'⁹² How neatly the summer of 1939 has mirrored the excruciating summer of 1938.

The next day Magda's friends—among them the ubiquitous and bitchy Ello—cut her; a salutary lesson in Goebbels' heartless view. As they drive out of Bayreuth, willingly foregoing the leaden, mystic gloom of *Parsifal*, a burden falls from his shoulders. He and Magda have decided to live together again. He has won the last round.⁹³

1939

35: Pact with the Devil

GOEBBELS returned briefly to Berlin for the afternoon of July 28, 1939 to open the radio exhibition. The emphasis was on peace; the big attraction was television; the first sets would soon go on sale.¹ The rebuilding of No. 20 Hermann-Göring Strasse was nearly complete; he hoped to move in on August 15, although he wanted the color scheme changed before then. Karl Hanke stayed out of sight (he went on leave, and eventually joined the army). Goebbels lived in a daze, his faith in human nature finally shattered, or so he claimed.² Back in Munich he found Magda awaiting him.³ Over the next few days they both thawed out. Magda was taken aside more than once by well-meaning critics; but she told them their decision was now final.⁴

Goebbels was still confident that the September Nuremberg rally would go ahead as planned.⁵ Among his miscellaneous directives that summer he requested editors to take note that Peru was not a U.S. state; to report murder trials only in local editions;⁶ to mention sex cases involving Jews only where they had seduced Aryan women by concealing their race; always to give Jewish defendants their mandatory first names of Israel or Sara; and to report with the utmost delicacy Sir Oswald Mosley's latest mass meeting in Earl's Court ('so the democratic press has no locus to depict him as being in Germany's pay'). Editors were instructed however not to overpraise the dancer Palucca, a half-Jew; not to refer to the World Exhibition, but to the New York Exhibition; not to review books by marxist liberals; not to reveal that the Führer had commuted the death sentence on a certain murderer; not to disclose the visit of seventy American-born Germans ('so as not to compromise their later operations'); not to refer to the 'Third Reich' but to National Socialist Germany; not to reproduce the Führer's article on architecture from the latest issue of *Art in the Third Reich* (a title which violated his own edict); and not to publish candid-camera photographs of the infinitely vain Hermann Göring or his wife.

Intensifying his propaganda attack on Britain, he ordered editors for example to remind readers of the August 1915 incident when the British warship Baralong had sunk the Kaiser's submarine U-27, then murdered its survivors one by one.⁸

Analysis of these secret directives shows that over Poland he was still pulling his punches. On August 1 the national press was ordered to display reserve in discussing the Polish army officers infiltrated into

157 Danzig disguised as customs officials.⁹ Only on the seventh did the Germany press agency D.N.B. issue a full statement.¹⁰ His propaganda was now an integral part of the military build-up. Hitler told economics minister Walter Funk, who had been badgering him to reduce the foreign currency allocated to the propaganda ministry, to leave the sum unchanged.¹¹

HITLER had gone down to the Berghof after Bayreuth, and Goebbels attended none of his historic conferences during August. He spent the second week of August in Venice with Magda and several colleagues, returning a visit made by his Italian counterpart Dino Alfieri.¹² There survives a letter from Magda's secretary, her childhood friend Wilma Freybe, to Goebbels' adjutant: The Frau Reichsminister had received an invitation to the coming Nuremberg party rally, her first in two years. Did the minister want her to accept?¹³ With Alfieri, he worked on an agreement on collaboration between their two countries' media, as well as film and radio.¹⁴

Clad in summer whites, he and Magda lazed around in gondolas, scudded across the Adriatic in torpedo boats, visited art galleries, inspected a Venetian glass factory, sunned themselves on the beaches, and generally acted as man and wife again—'How long it is since I last had that!'¹⁵ Overwhelmed by the Arabian Nights atmosphere of Venice, he took little note of the developing crisis, except for an insolent speech on Danzig by the Polish president ('so it will soon be time').¹⁶ He learned that Ciano was bound for the Berghof ('but it's not time yet').¹⁷

8
On August 8, continuing his holiday, he ordered Polish terror incidents still relegated to page two, with Polish threats against Germany promoted to page one.¹⁸ When *Kurier Polski* declaimed 'Germany must be destroyed,' the ministry ordered editors to headline this quotation on their front page.¹⁹ On the eleventh Hitler ordered the volume of the anti-Polish propaganda turned up to eighty percent.²⁰ That day Goebbels ordered Polish terrorist incidents moved onto page one. 'The display is not as yet to exceed two columns however. ... Newspapers must take care,' he instructed, explaining the precise propaganda dosage, 'not to exhaust all their arguments and vocabulary prematurely.'²¹ Nobody was to mention territorial claims.²² On the fifteenth the minister and his wife flew back to Berlin, picking up the foreign newspapers in Munich on the way. He observed with satisfaction that the British and French were in disarray and were relieved by rumors of German peace initiatives.²³ 'It's now time,' he dictated the next day, 'for the German press to abandon its previous reserve.'²⁴ News items about Polish terror acts were to be well displayed but not splashed so sensationally that people 'might conclude that a decisive event is imminent.'²⁵

15
At six P.M. on August 15 he and his family moved back into his expensively (3.2 million marks, or three-quarters of a million dollars) rebuilt official residence. The old palace had been demolished in June 1938. To the 164 workmen gathered at the topping-out ceremony in

17
Aug 1939
PACT WITH THE DEVIL 305

January 1939 his office chief, the blindly submissive Werner Naumann, had explained that the 'leading men and ministers from around the world' would be coming to this official residence, hence the luxurious appointments: There was a marble-galleried banquet hall at ground level; all the rooms, except for the marbled bathrooms, were paneled in costly walnut, mahogany, rosewood, and cherry. Cost-cutting was confined to the servants' quarters, where the eighteen household staff were allowed three primitive Volksempfänger radio sets and one bathtub between them.²⁶ It was not yet ready, but it was home. Goebbels grimly prayed that the house would bring them both more happiness than they had known over the last year.

After supper he inspected the house, and found a lot to curse his architect Paul Baumgarten for. A stickler for detail, he dictated five pages of complaints: A picture of a church in his study was to be replaced by one of the Führer; and the up-market interior decorators United Workshops were to remake his desk, chair, and upholstery in a red that would match the curtains and carpet.²⁷ He was moreover having serious problems financing the luxurious new mansion taking shape on the other side of the lake at Lanke.²⁸ Discussing his personal finances with Dr Karl Ott, his chief of administration, he admitted that they were catastrophic: 'I've got to find some way out.'²⁹

'The war,' he wrote on August 17, 'is now expected with a degree of fatalism. It would almost take a miracle to avoid it.' Hitler was lurking down at the Berghof, where he had taken the decision to invade Poland early on the twenty-sixth; but he had evidently not yet notified Goebbels because the latter began drafting the speeches he would deliver at the Nuremberg party rally still scheduled to be held in September.³⁰

On August 18 the ministry instructed editors to adopt a typical Goebbels device, namely to personalize their attack; in this case they were to blame the Polish governor of eastern Upper Silesia personally for the 'barbaric terror' wave.³¹ While newspapers were encouraged to carry interviews with German refugees even these were to be 'deliberately understated.'³² The war of nerves had begun for him quite literally; he spent that night and all next day doubled up in bed with painful stomach cramps (perhaps of emotional origin?) as he brooded on his own financial crisis and his country slithering toward war.³³ During the day a phone call from the Berghof instructed him to turn up the propaganda volume to full blast by Tuesday the twenty-second. 'So the balloon can go up then,' concluded Goebbels, not liking it at all.³⁴

The very regimentation of this press coverage produced a ghastly sense of *déjà vu* in foreign diplomats, as no doubt Hitler intended. The astute American military attaché observed on the twenty-first that, with German blood now flowing, German refugees fleeing, and German families being attacked by brutish Polish mobs, Goebbels had reached the same stage as in the last week of September 1938: Only the place names and the enemy were different.³⁵

* * *

ALL of Goebbels' previous problems paled beside the psychological problem of presenting to his public the totally unexpected news that Hitler and Stalin were doing a deal.

Previous indicators during July had been so minute that a seismograph would not have detected them. On July 8 Hitler had told Goebbels that he no longer expected London and Moscow to reach an agreement. 'That leaves the way open for us,' Goebbels had deduced. 'Stalin doesn't want either a won or a lost war. In either case he'd be history.'³⁶ He asked editors not to express glee at the stalling of the Anglo-French negotiations in Moscow;³⁷ not to comment on differences emerging between Moscow and Tokyo;³⁸ and not to pick up foreign press reports that Poland was making airfields available to the Soviet air force.³⁹ Newspapers were told to ignore the German-Soviet trade talks.⁴⁰ Totally unexpectedly the news came on August 20 that Berlin had signed a new trade agreement with Moscow: 'How times change,' was Goebbels' only comment, cautious enough; he instructed editors to restrict the news to one column on page one, with commentaries only of an economic nature.⁴¹

At the government press conference on August 21, he proudly noted, he 'poured oil on the flames. But still kept some in reserve.' General Wilhelm Keitel, chief of the High Command, told him that militarily everything was ready for the attack on Poland. The Germans had almost 1.5 million men under arms. It would take a miracle to avoid war, decided Goebbels. Overwhelmed by his own preparations, he had no time to start constructing his speech for Nuremberg. Studying the wiretap intercepts, he concluded that blind panic was spreading in the enemy camp.⁴² That evening Goebbels heard the news of the Nazi-Soviet pact, and that his arch rival Ribbentrop, triumphant, would be signing the historic document two days later, August 23, in Moscow. 'That really is something!' gasped Goebbels. 'That's a whole new ball-game. We're home and dry. Now we can sleep a bit more peacefully again.'⁴³

The news totally threw Goebbels; it was like living in an eternal kaleidoscope. No sooner did he think he had seen it all than there was a completely new constellation. War still seemed likely, but with Poland's only viable ally now eliminated the conclusion seemed foregone. Goebbels and his staff threw themselves into the final war preparations. His first press directive the next morning spoke of a 'sensational turning point' in their relations with Russia; then caution prevailed and his next directive, while allowing editors to remark upon the ideological differences separating Berlin and Moscow, forbade them to quote even foreign commentaries on the probable consequences. 'Any observations must be sober and objective in tenor,' his third directive that day added, 'devoid of either triumph or Schadenfreude.'⁴⁴

The next telephone intercepts revealed 'utter despair' in the enemy camp.⁴⁵ Out in Lanke, where he and Magda were inspecting building operations, he received a phone call from Hitler in euphoric mood. Goebbels congratulated him on his masterstroke.⁴⁶ That day the Führer had summoned his generals in mufti to the Berghof to hear his plan to

Aug 1939

attack Poland in four days' time, and the astonishing news of the coming non-aggression pact with Russia.⁴⁷

Early the next day, August 23, 1939, before flying down to the Berghof, Goebbels reminded editors that their readers would not understand it if they suddenly sprouted 'flowery and jubilant articles' about German-Soviet friendship. Journalists should gradually warm to the pact to camouflage its opportunistic nature.⁴⁸

The Führer [Goebbels told his diary] is in conference with [Sir Neville] Henderson. He has brought back a letter from Chamberlain: If Poland is attacked, this says, Britain will go to war. The Führer gives Henderson a robust response. Henderson is quite shattered. The Führer dictates a letter of reply to Chamberlain: If London mobilizes, then Germany's mobilization will ensue. A stop will be put to the Polish provocations. This letter's tone is quite adamant. . . .

The Führer greets me very cordially. He wants me to be with him over the next few days. In the afternoon he gives me a broad overview of the situation: Poland's plight is desperate. We shall attack her at the first possible opportunity. The Polish state must be smashed just like the Czech. It won't take much effort. More difficult is the question whether the west will intervene. At present one can't say. It depends. London is talking tougher than in September 1938. So we're going to have to box cunning. At present Britain probably doesn't want war. But she can't lose face. . . .

Paris is holding back more and dodging the issue. But there too we can't say anything hard and fast. . . .

Italy isn't keen but she'll probably go along with us. She's hardly got any choice. Japan has missed the bus. How often the Führer has urged them to join the military alliance, even telling them he'd have to join forces with Moscow otherwise. . . . Now Japan is pretty isolated.

Hitler described to Goebbels the deal he had struck with Stalin, with the Baltic states and Poland being split between Berlin and Moscow.⁴⁹

'The question of bolshevism,' noted Goebbels, 'is for the time being of lesser importance.' It was a throwaway line of breathtaking brevity considering all that he had fought against for fifteen years. Hitler speculated that Chamberlain might even resign. On the phone from Moscow, Ribbentrop asked if the Russians might have the Latvian ports of Libau and Windau. 'The Führer approves this,' observed Goebbels. They whiled away the hours watching a movie, until the communiqué finally came through from Moscow. At one A.M. Poland's fate was sealed. They sat up until four A.M. examining the implications.

It was dawn when Goebbels returned to his quarters—still in the humble guesthouse to which Hitler had relegated him.⁵⁰ Probably the Führer had by now told him that he had confidently scheduled the attack on Poland to begin at dawn on Saturday the twenty-sixth.

On the twenty-fourth (Thursday) both men agreed that it was surprising that there had been so little echo from the world's press to the

Aug

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Moscow signing. Goebbels lifted the ban on editors speculating on what the new pact would mean for Poland: 'You can indicate that the purpose of this pact is to enable Germany and Russia alone to settle all outstanding problems in the Lebensraum between them, i.e. in eastern Europe.'⁵¹ A second directive that day probably reflected Hitler's decision to strike in two days' time. Editors were now invited to comment on the speed with which the Moscow pact had been signed. 'Newspapers are permitted to display a degree of Schadenfreude, though not in their editorial columns.'⁵² Editors were still not to go into specifics; reports about Polish mobilization and atrocities, and about Danzig, were still to take precedence over the new pact.⁵³

The Führer and his propaganda minister decided it was high time to fly back to Berlin.

During the flight Hitler was on edge; Goebbels wondered how he kept his nerve in crises like this.⁵⁴ That it *was* a crisis became plain when Goebbels read the telegrams: Chamberlain had told the House of Commons that Britain still stood by her promise to Poland. The radio waves were filled with the chatter of panicking commentators—and Goebbels too lay awake for hours that night.⁵⁵

25 Friday August 25, 1939 dawned, the eve of war—or so Hitler had planned. At two-thirty P.M. the final mobilization against Poland was due to start. At the noon press conference the ministry instructed editors of the next day's newspapers to highlight Polish preparations for attacking Germany, the Polish blockade of Danzig, and Polish acts of terrorism.⁵⁶ A lieutenant-colonel briefed Goebbels that the attack was scheduled to begin at 4:30 A.M. the next day: A swift *coup de main* against Gdynia, Danzig to declare for the Reich, and then an all-out military onslaught against eastern Upper Silesia. At midday Hitler told him to get two declarations ready, one to the people and one to the party. Forster phoned from Danzig—evidently heedless of telephone security—and demanded leaflets for the Polish army and population. Goebbels heard that the British ambassador had gone to see Hitler again, and that Hitler had offered Britain the closest cooperation after Poland had been dealt with. 'Britain doesn't believe us any more,' commented Goebbels. When Hitler said much the same to France's ambassador, the latter replied stiffly that 'on his word as an officer' France would be obliged to fight.

Undeterred, at 3:02 P.M. Hitler issued the secret executive order for Case White, the attack on Poland at dawn. Japan's ambassador briefly saw him after that—a frosty meeting under the circumstances.

THE Japanese ambassador was followed by the Italian, Bernardo Attolico. Embarrassed, he conveyed to Hitler the shocking news that Italy, his new ally, would not join in this war.

'There you have it,' commented Goebbels acidly. 'As I always feared and probably knew too ever since Venice. Italy wants out.'

It was a hideous new situation: Hitler had been banking on Italy's support. He had to cancel all his orders for 'White'. Goebbels rushed

Aug 1939

out a 'supplemental' directive to his editors revoking the midday directive. The new instructions called for 'press discipline' and 'caution'—editors were to hold back their stories on the Poles' military actions and terrorism.⁵⁷ A photographer snapped Hitler and Bormann with Otto Dietrich and Dr Goebbels, all in plain clothes; the propaganda minister was looking at his feet, baffled.⁵⁸ 'The Führer,' recorded Goebbels, 'is brooding and thinking things over. It's a hard blow for him. But he'll find a way out, even from this devilish situation. He's always found one before and he'll do so this time too.' As grim-faced generals dashed this way and that, Goebbels hurried back to his ministry to throw his whole machinery into reverse as well. It took him until midnight; Magda, ashen-faced with worry, came to be with him. Everything depended on maintaining the pressure, he decided: On keeping a stiff upper lip.

So he wrote afterward, recording this eventful day.⁵⁹ And that was the directive he issued at next morning's press conference. It adumbrated for the first time 'preventive' German operations, but forbade speculation on dates and deadlines; there must be no talk of 'one minute to twelve,' or 'an attack is expected hourly.' The tame newshounds were thus led briefly back to their kennels.⁶⁰

Not surprisingly the Wehrmacht was in a foul mood—they had been all set to attack. Gauleiter Forster phoned from Danzig, depressed by this unexpected turn of events. Dino Alfieri phoned Goebbels from Rome, asking it if was true that Hitler was to broadcast; Goebbels called the rumor a foreign fabrication.⁶¹

He too was in two minds—Britain had now ratified her pact with Poland, encouraged evidently by Italy's defection. When the French and British ambassadors both asked to see Hitler, Goebbels clutched at straws—'Perhaps we'll manage to extricate ourselves from the current sticky situation,' he wrote. 'We've got to be very cunning now.'

The introduction of food rationing confronted him with serious propaganda problems. He harangued Herbert Backe, Darré's Staatssekretär, in the middle of that night about the minuscule fruit and tea rations allowed for, then gave vent to his feelings about the secretiveness of the foreign ministry. The whole world knew, he grumbled, that the British and French ambassadors had been to see Hitler, but Germany's own radio said nothing—which forced German listeners willy-nilly into the arms of the B.B.C.⁶² After that he sat up until three A.M. reading further worrying reports on public morale.⁶³

The embassy wiretap reports which he read the next day, Sunday August 27, gave cause for cautious optimism; but not the one-page digest on morale that Gutterer had compiled for Hitler from their propaganda agencies throughout the Reich. In short, the whole population was against war. The document, typed out in half-inch characters on the special typewriter used for the short-sighted Führer, was dynamite. Goebbels, aware of his own precarious position, had no desire to hand it over himself. He took Gutterer along with him to Hitler's lunch table wearing his black S.S. Brigadeführer's uniform. Hitler read the document,

Aug 2

purpled with rage, and took Gutterer through into the winter-garden. But Himmler, joining them there, soberly backed the propaganda official: His own Gestapo morale reports painted just the same picture. Both men had reports of anti-war demonstrations in Vienna. Goebbels said nothing.⁶⁴

Later that day Hitler reviewed the whole situation with him. 'It is very grave,' recorded Goebbels, adding the familiar nostrum: 'But the Führer will pull us through. On Poland, our minimum demand is Danzig and a corridor across their corridor. Maximum—that's a matter of record. The Führer can't abandon our minimum demand. And he'll get his way. It's become a matter of honor. Nobody can say what will transpire. The Führer is glad we don't have a monarchy any more. The Italy business has been declared top state secret. Death penalty for treason.'

Hitler spoke to all the Reichstag deputies at five P.M. in the ambassadors' suite of the chancellery. He appealed for courage, and was rewarded with an ovation. He told them that Danzig and the Corridor were his minimum demands. If war came, he would be in the front line. 'As long as I live,' he said dramatically, 'there is to be no talk of capitulation.' He justified his controversial deal with Stalin as being a pact with the devil to drive our Beelzebub.⁶⁵

FOR the next five days Dr Goebbels held the editors like acrobats frozen in mid-leap: In suspended animation until Hitler gave the order for White to proceed. It was not easy. Germany must not lose the initiative. He released to the front pages a welter of stories about visits of ambassadors and exchanges of letters. The wiretaps meanwhile showed a further deterioration in the situation.⁶⁶

28

The press conference on August 28 was long and difficult. Goebbels still forbade newspapers to play up 'Polish terrorism.' Birger Dahlerus, Göring's secret emissary, had brought word from London that the British might swallow Hitler's minimum demands but they would insist on a guarantee of Poland's frontiers. They could adjourn the issue of colonies until later. A long peace with Britain would follow, which might set Germany at loggerheads with Italy: 'But Rome left us in the lurch,' reflected Goebbels. 'And Moscow would also have to guarantee Poland's frontiers'—which Stalin would never do.

Tipped off by Rome, London must surely have known of Hitler's present predicament. Chamberlain believed he could let Germany stew in her own juice. ('Italy is standing well back,' Goebbels wrote contemptuously. 'Her diplomats promise to fight with us to the last drop of ink.')⁶⁷

Consumed by these anxieties, Goebbels had long worried talks with press chief Otto Dietrich—he too saw the gravity of the hour—and Göring, who was also, as Goebbels put it, pleading for moderation.⁶⁸

A sweltering August heat baked the capital. There were fist-fights outside food stores, as crowds began hoarding for the coming war; a run

Aug 1939

on the banks began. Lunchtime found Hitler grim and rather worn down.⁶⁹

The postponement of hostilities had dislocated Goebbels' timetable. With the war machine crassly halted, there was nothing to report. He directed the press on August 29 to step up the attack on Poland, although it was both difficult and unpopular. From the frontline areas like the Saar he had reports that the mood was anything but blind jingoism. Hitler suggested to Ambassador Henderson that there be a plebiscite in the Corridor. 'He hopes to detach London from Warsaw after all,' assessed Goebbels, 'and thus to find some pretext for attack.'

Hitler agreed that Britain might invite a Polish negotiator to come to Berlin.

His head throbbing with the round-the-clock load of ministerial duties, Goebbels feared that the arrival of a Polish diplomat might result in a ruinous wave of optimism in Germany.⁷⁰ At the press conference on the thirtieth Goebbels again pleaded for a stiff upper lip: Editors were to reserve their vitriol for Poland and her 'atrocities,' while still holding back the most glaring examples, and going easy on England for a while as London seemed to be softening towards Hitler's demands.⁷¹ But this directive was later overtaken by one announcing Polish mobilization: 'The news . . . is to be given top billing and editorial commentary.'⁷² (In a significant sentence, editors were asked *not* to mention a 'frontier incident at Hochlinde near Gleiwitz:' a phony raid by S.S. men wearing Polish uniforms had gone off at half-cock.)⁷³

At midnight Hitler sent for him:

He sets out the situation. The British are still hanging tough. Not a peep out of Poland yet. The Führer thinks there *will* be war. Italy's defection is not all that bad for us, as Italy is the most vulnerable to attack by the Entente powers. The Führer has drafted a memorandum: Danzig to be German, a plebiscite in the Corridor in twelve months' time on the basis of 1918; fifty-one percent of the vote to be decisive. Loser to get a one-kilometer-wide corridor across the Corridor. Minorities problems to be examined by an international commission. When the time is ripe the Führer will toss this document to the world community.⁷⁴

His head reeling from worry, late nights, and overwork, Goebbels found it hard to write up his diary on September 1—even as Hitler's war began. The situation changed hourly. He recalled having turned the press conference loose on Britain the day before. Karl Bömer had brought over the latest sheaf of embassy wiretaps from Göring's Forschungsamt: They made clear that alarm bells were ringing in Paris and London. The French and British ambassadors had been overheard agreeing to beg their Polish colleague, Lipski, to go on his own initiative to Hitler.

'But he can't be found,' observed Goebbels, 'for hours at a time. Poland is obviously playing for time.'

'Göring is still skeptical,' he recorded. 'The Führer still does not believe

Aug

Sept

Britain will intervene. Nobody can say as yet. The S.S. is given special orders for the coming night'—commando-style operations behind the Polish lines.⁷⁵ In the evening the Polish ambassador was heard asking for an audience. But Hitler had ordered an end to the talking, and Lipski was not allowed to see Ribbentrop until too late. When he confessed that Warsaw had given him no instructions, Ribbentrop brusquely ended the meeting.

'So that's that,' noted Goebbels. 'The Führer is now incommunicado.'

They all talked until midnight, watching the hours tick past. Göring saw a slim chance that London might not act. Goebbels was less sanguine. Hitler released the text of his memorandum, they all hung around a map for a while, then Goebbels returned home to Magda, who was waiting for him.⁷⁶



IV: The Propaganda Warrior

Aug 1939

36: War



iv: The Propaganda Warrior

Aug 1939

36: War

UNTIL the last moment, Dr Goebbels hoped that the western powers were bluffing, but feared that they were not.¹ After Hans Fritzsche had provided an opinion analysis showing that the British were determined to fight, Goebbels submitted a thoughtful memorandum to Hitler.² At his press conference that Friday September 1, after Hitler's historic speech to the Reichstag, Goebbels was able to use plain talk again—which he called 'a real blessing.' Be that as it may, he directed editors to avoid using the word *war* and to adopt instead the formula: 'We are fending off Polish attacks.'³ On the morning of the third his press attaché Moritz von Schirmeister briefed him on the latest news from Reuters.

Goebbels asked: 'What about Britain?' Schirmeister replied that she had not declared war yet. 'Now you see!' triumphed the minister. But an hour later Chamberlain's ultimatum reached them. 'Well, so it did happen,' conceded Goebbels. Until that moment he had not believed it.⁴ He repeated to the editors the injunction to use the word *war* only sparingly.⁵ 'Believe me,' he told Göring, 'we have not done all we have for six years to throw it all away in a war.'

'This will be a war about political ideas,' he wrote in a twenty-five-page memorandum for Hitler entitled 'Thoughts on the Outbreak of War, 1939.' He described the German public mood at that moment as being 'grim but calm.' The disaster of 1918 was fresh in many minds—'So there is nothing of the hooray-atmosphere of 1914,' he warned. With each victory, however, their determination would grow—he himself would see to that. Foreshadowing the great dispute with Ribbentrop that was beginning, he insisted that the entire foreign propaganda effort be concentrated in one hand—namely his own. He saw great propaganda opportunities this time: Unlike 1914, the declarations of war had come from the enemy; and the British and French were repeatedly overflying neutral Holland and Belgium, and committing other violations of international law. 'Britain,' he pointed out to Hitler, 'is governed by the old men of 1914 who are incapable of thinking straight or logically because of their hate complexes.' Poisoned by 'Jewish capital,' Britain would fight to the last man, he prophesied—the last man, that was, of every other nation but herself, and particularly the French. Only the foreign propaganda weapon, he suggested, would defeat Britain. Even bombing would not yield victory, given the famed tenacity of the British people.⁶

The diary and other documents provide intrinsic evidence of how low he still lay in Hitler's esteem. The Führer had barely consulted him about his war plans. He saw little of him during the Polish campaign; once he tried to reach Hitler by phone, but was told he was away at the front.⁷ Ignoring Goebbels' lengthy memorandum, the Führer awarded all foreign propaganda work to Ribbentrop—a terrible rebuff to his propaganda minister. Hitler had an enduring respect for Ribbentrop which subsequent historians have been unable to explain or share. 'It is totally incomprehensible to me,' Goebbels recorded, hearing of the draft decree. 'It will destroy my entire ministry.'⁸ As will be seen, Hitler would thereafter keep from Goebbels vital information, for instance about the sinking of the British liner Athenia,⁹ about the attempt on his life in November,¹⁰ and, in 1940–41, about his intention to attack the Soviet Union.

HITLER announced the opening of hostilities to the Reichstag on Friday September 1, 1939. He wore a field-gray tunic adorned with the simple Iron Cross he had won in the world war. Morale in Berlin that day was 'grave but resolute,' the deputy gauleiter reported. Chamberlain threatened war if Hitler did not pull his troops out of Poland. 'Wait and see,' was Goebbels' private comment.¹¹ He ordered the press to mute its remarks about London and Paris, reserving its full venom for Warsaw.¹² 'The situation has undergone one remarkable change,' he noted. 'Mussolini has intervened and proposes a six-power conference. A ceasefire until then. The Führer says he's not disinclined to go along, once he gets his hands on something worthwhile. Thus all military efforts are concentrated on shutting off the Corridor.'¹³

The civilian minister, Goebbels, had real cause to fear that the military would henceforth command Hitler's undivided attention. Although his diary had frequently displayed genuine admiration for the junior officer corps, he detested the older, knuckle-brained army generals and found words of admiration only for Blomberg and Fritsch.¹⁴ When Polish machine-gun bullets shortly ended Fritsch's life, Goebbels demonstratively attended the state funeral while Keitel, Himmler, and the S.S. generals stayed away.¹⁵

HIS fear that war would marginalize him proved well founded. He was invited to visit Hitler's field headquarters only twice during the entire Polish campaign.¹⁶ In Hitler's absence, Goebbels' critics became more vociferous. 'The party veterans reject him to a man,' wrote Rosenberg. 'Gauleiters tell me that if the Führer would only dump him, they'd eat him for breakfast.'¹⁷ The tension between Goebbels and his colleagues was evident whenever Göring's ministerial Reich Defense Committee met. Presiding buddha-like over these Cabinet-style meetings, Göring did nothing to protect Goebbels. 'Goebbels appears to be finished,' wrote one rival happily after seeing the field marshal. 'What a blessing.'¹⁸ That Göring had the upper hand was evident on Day Two, as he unexpectedly ordered most of Goebbels' radio stations to shut down in the evenings

39

so that the enemy air force could not use them as radio beacons.¹⁹

The conflict of personalities became plain on the very first day of war, September 1, 1939. Goebbels had circulated a proposed law making it a criminal, even capital, offense to listen to foreign radio broadcasts and calling for all radio sets to be turned over to the authorities.²⁰ He met an immediate storm of protest from other ministers. Justice Minister Gürtner pointed to the damning effect it would have at home and abroad on the credibility of their own propaganda, besides creating an army of petty snoopers and informers.²¹ The Göring committee unanimously turned down Goebbels' proposal.²² The next day however the minister of the interior Dr Frick persuaded Hitler to accept a ban on listening to foreign political broadcasts, and that evening Goebbels' radio announced the new law.²³ As both Frick and Rudolph Hess pointed out to Hitler, if Goebbels called in everybody's radio sets the people would be unable to hear their Führer, that suggestion—which was surely one of his less intelligent plans—was abandoned. The confiscation was restricted to Jewish-owned radios.²⁴ Goebbels circularized all party officials that 'under the Reich Defense Committee ordinance of September 1' even they were forbidden to tune in to foreign broadcasts.²⁵

On other issues too he found it hard to prevail. He objected that printing the party's eagle on ration cards would link it too closely with rationing. 'I fear, Dr Goebbels,' retorted Darré sarcastically, 'that this is a war which is not going to be won by popularity.'²⁶

'The Russian military mission arrives in Berlin,' Goebbels noted on September 3. 'A great advantage for us.' But his jubilation was short-lived, as London dictated an ultimatum to Hitler at nine A.M., timed to expire at eleven. 'Straight over to the Reich chancellery,' he recorded. 'The Führer is indignant and has no intention of accepting the ultimatum. He dictates a biting memorandum in which he justifies this.' Even after listening to Chamberlain's radio declaration of war Goebbels was still asking: 'Will London really go for broke?'

Sept

Before departing for the 'eastern front' that evening, Hitler reassured him that he anticipated only a phony war in the west. Goebbels was skeptical: 'Now that Churchill is known to be in the Cabinet [as First Lord of the Admiralty] I find that hard to believe.' Göring too had his doubts, he discovered in a lengthy conversation with the field marshal that night: Economically and Militarily, Germany could see it through—but even Göring secretly wondered whether the German people would.²⁷

For a few days, Goebbels was overwhelmed by the new problems of directing propaganda in a shooting war. Hearing of the sinking of the Athenia ('it can't have been us,' he assured his private diary), he dismissed it at once as 'a fresh bluff and propaganda trick by Churchill & Co.' and started 'the denial machine' rolling.²⁸ When Poland claimed that Nazi troops had destroyed the Madonna of Czestochowa, Goebbels flew American journalist Louis Lochner thither in a bomber to see that it was a lie. He had eight hundred banners erected along the western front proclaiming to the French, 'WE WON'T SHOOT IF YOU DON'T. WE'VE NO

QUARREL WITH YOU!²⁹ Leopold Gutterer, one of his most inventive aides, suggested they cascade tons of forged pound notes over Britain—thirty percent of its entire currency. Goebbels liked the idea until it occurred to him that the British might well retaliate in kind.³⁰ A file of his phone conversations with his Italian counterpart confirms his early tactics. He suggested that the Italians concentrate on driving a wedge between the British and French, reserving their most hostile language for Churchill, Eden, and Chamberlain; he asked that if he issued a denial, the Italian press should give it prominence too.³¹

At air staff headquarters outside Potsdam on the fifth, Göring assured him that they would soon have a strategic breakthrough in Poland. The field marshal expressed outrage at the Italians for their cold feet. Sitting under the trees, the two Nazis quietly discussed Germany's plight if a full-scale world war developed. Churchill's appointment to Chamberlain's Cabinet had shocked them both—but Goebbels hoped the British might still be bluffing.³² Göring had nothing but contempt for Ribbentrop, blaming him for having been too inflexible in stating German demands. On the seventh Goebbels flew in a bomber to Hitler's headquarters near Gross-Born to discuss Ribbentrop's take-over of foreign propaganda:

The Führer [he recorded] is living in an armored train in the middle of a forest. . . . He looks magnificent and is in good humor. He at once sets out the situation. The Poles are in a state of complete military collapse. . . . Their situation is hopeless. Our tanks are pushing on without stopping.

When Goebbels moved to touchier matters—the extraordinary decree granting Ribbentrop control of foreign propaganda—Hitler asked him to settle things with the foreign minister direct. Goebbels tried and not surprisingly failed; he found the next day that Hitler had dictated a brief decree defining the two squabbling ministers' areas of responsibility.³³ Although Goebbels was broadly satisfied to find his own ministry left intact, the decree remained a thorn in his flesh for the next four years.³⁴

For all his loud mouth, he was not a fighting man. The prospect of a long war unsettled him, and he registered with alarm each statement by Chamberlain warning that Britain was resolved to fight to the finish.³⁵ He made a brief foray into foreign policy when Dino Alfieri phoned from Rome on the ninth with word that Mussolini proposed that the Italian press ventilate a possible solution whereby the Polish government resigned in favor of ministers willing to make peace; to fight a war in the west, the Duce had added, would be nonsense. 'I treat the matter dilatorily,' Goebbels cautiously recorded, 'then phone the Führer. He is very interested in the offer, but suspects that Mussolini is aiming at a general European peace conference. He therefore asks me to skirt around the subject for the time being; I am to thank Alfieri for any support, but say that I cannot reach the Führer.'³⁶ When Alfieri asked the next day what Moscow was doing, Goebbels stated that he had no official word, but 'something was evidently afoot in Russia.'³⁷ (Stalin's troops invaded

Oct 39

WAR 319

eastern Poland three days later 'to protect her minorities,' and arguing that 'because a Polish state no longer existed.'³⁸ Ribbentrop shortly asked him to desist from further telephone conversations with Alfieri. 'The Führer does not want to tie himself down.'³⁹

Hitler phoned him the next evening and asked to see him. Together again the next morning in Upper Silesia, they agreed that the fall of Warsaw would be a psychological blow to the enemy. Moscow would probably then intervene. Italy seemed passive, even downright hostile. 'Mussolini seems displeased,' Hitler told Goebbels. But he wanted to preserve their friendship, so Goebbels was to keep the channel to Alfieri open. He showed the Führer the script of his forthcoming speech: Hitler asked him to sharpen the attack on Britain's warmongering role. 'Once we've dealt with the east,' recorded Goebbels, 'he wants to take on the west. He has no use for a long war. If there's got to be war, then short and sharp.'

In Warsaw however the Poles put up a protracted and heroic resistance. The city's commandant called the city's population to arms, and told them to 'resort to every means of combat.' On the sixteenth Goebbels warned Rome that the Wehrmacht would therefore issue an ultimatum and bombard Warsaw. 'There will be an avalanche of protests and defamations from London and Paris,' he anticipated. 'We ask for the support of the Italian press and propaganda.'⁴⁰ Warsaw held out for eight more days under a ruinous air and artillery bombardment. Concerned about Germany's image, Goebbels resorted to legalisms and an appeal to baser human instincts. He directed the platoons of Nazi war reporters and newsreel cameramen:

1. Never refer to Warsaw as a city in reports, but always as a fortress.
2. Use much more film footage than hitherto of Jewish types from Warsaw and the entire occupied area including both character-studies and the Jews at forced labour. This material should service to reinforce our antisemitic education drive both at home and abroad.⁴¹

With Hitler back in Berlin the phony war began, and he gradually became more approachable again. Goebbels attended lunch almost every day. On the twenty-seventh he found Hitler optimistic. He hoped the enemy would see reason. 'It depends on London,' he explained at lunch on October 10, 'whether the war goes on.'⁴² Gradually however his hopes of peace faded, and he authorized Goebbels to turn up the heat on Chamberlain. Churchill however seemed the more rewarding target—easier to identify with the English plutocracy. 'He lives in the sixteenth century,' Hitler would agree. 'Totally out of touch with the real needs of his people.'⁴³ Since Churchill's speeches were at this pass in Britain's naval fortunes necessarily economical with the truth, ridiculing him was too great a temptation for Goebbels to resist.⁴⁴

As the propagandist for an as yet undefeated belligerent Goebbels on the other hand saw no real need to lie. His untruths were still unintentional: Relying on Luftwaffe claims, he declared as sunk not only the

battleship Royal Oak (sunk that October) but also the aircraft carrier Ark Royal and the cruiser Repulse which remained very much afloat.⁴⁵ Egged on by Hitler—who had learned almost immediately that one of his own U-boats had sunk the British liner—Goebbels reverted to the Athenia mystery in the third week of October.⁴⁶ ‘Perhaps,’ he noted, ‘we’ll even succeed in sinking him [Churchill]. That would be worth more than sinking two battleships.’⁴⁷ He wrote a big article accusing the Englishman of having had the Athenia scuttled himself, and broadcast this libel worldwide, calling him a criminal who should now be called to the bar of world opinion. ‘I’m working flat out to overthrow this man,’ he admitted privately.⁴⁸ Churchill retorted that Goebbels’ charge was simply laughable. ‘He won’t be laughing soon,’ snapped Goebbels in the privacy of his diary.⁴⁹

THE PROPAGANDA ministry had rapidly adjusted for war. At eleven each morning Goebbels held a ‘ministerial’ conference with his department heads and their advisors, about thirty to fifty officials all told, in his private office.⁵⁰ At a quarter to noon Hitler’s press officer Otto Dietrich or his hard-nosed deputy Alfred-Ingemar Berndt would hold a further conference elsewhere in the same building to coordinate Goebbels’ decisions with requests submitted by other ministries. After 1940 this later conference would end with the dictation to a stenographer of formal *Tagesparolen*, themes for the day which were read out to the general press conference immediately following at twelve-fifteen P.M., attended by one or two hundred German journalists (but only rarely by Goebbels).

About one-third of his men had been drafted into uniform. Karl Hanke, whom he had not seen since the summer, found himself spirited away to the Polish front in a panzer lieutenant’s uniform. In September 1939 the ministry employed 9,762 professional orators, and these would address precisely 156,143 political meetings over the first eleven months of war.⁵¹ He would have nearly three hundred mobile cinemas by the end of 1940. His printing presses spun off 560,000 poster-sized portraits of Hitler, and millions of leaflets, placards, banners, and wall-newspapers; eight million copies of the Slogan of the Week wall-newspaper would be printed by the end of 1940, along with war posters like ‘WITH OUR FLAGS IS VICTORY’, and, less famously, ‘THE ETERNAL JEW’ and ‘STAR OF DAVID.’

Two years earlier, Goebbels had banned one anti-Jewish film as being too shrill.⁵² It was only now, after the war began, that he started work on his own major antisemitic films. The first, *The Eternal Jew*, was produced by Franz Hippler and the Party’s movie company DFG. Using photo- and film-montage techniques that mixed documentary shots filmed in the squalor of the Warsaw ghetto and sequences from the feature movies of former big name ‘Jewish’ movie personalities like Max Reinhardt, Ernst Lubitsch, and Charlie Chaplin this hour-long production conveyed an undeniable visual message. From October 1939 the Goebbels Diary reveals him personally supervising the filming, and checking the necessarily unappetizing footage shot in the Polish synagogues and ghettos.

'One recoils involuntarily from the spectacle of so much filth,' reads one entry.⁵³ His cameramen had filmed the Jewish ritual slaughter of cattle, and Goebbels was undecided whether to use this revolting footage in this film or in *Jew Süss*, the Terra studios' remake of the 1935 British film of that name.⁵⁴ 'This will be *the* antisemitic film,' predicted Goebbels after reading Veit Harlan's treatment: a Jew, Süss Oppenheimer, becomes the Duke of Württemberg's crooked financial adviser and tax collector: involves him in swindles on a Maxwellian scale: is condemned to death.⁵⁵ Replete with scenes of rape and torture this film, released in 1940, would become one of the most insidious propaganda films of all time.⁵⁶

He had perceptibly relaxed his personal vendetta against the Jews during 1939, only to be goaded into reviving it by one of their less felicitous moves as the Zionist leader Dr Chaim Weizmann formally declared war on their behalf against Nazi Germany in September 1939.⁵⁷ Jewish cartoonists abroad poked fun at Goebbels' lame foot, and Jewish radio commentators in England snarled over the airwaves at him when he turned forty-two.⁵⁸ A few days later the *Daily Sketch* printed a cartoon showing him with Hitler and Göring, all hanging from gibbets surrounded by skulls. He repaid these hurts in ways that were petty rather than profound, ordering the Nazi newspapers to publish a cartoon showing Chamberlain in slippers and persuading Hitler to reduce the food allowances for Jews and to withhold chocolate from them altogether.⁵⁹

A visit to the Jewish ghetto in Lodz left an indelible imprint on his mind. 'Those are not human beings any longer,' he wrote after leaving his car to inspect it closer. 'Those are animals. So our task isn't a humanitarian, but a surgical one. ... Otherwise one day Europe will succumb to the Jewish pestilence.'⁶⁰ Back in Berlin he reported his impressions to Hitler. 'He thoroughly endorses my description of the Jewish problem,' he claimed in his diary. 'The Jews are a waste-product. They are more of a clinical than a social issue.'⁶¹ After visiting the eastern territories again he told Hitler about the unwholesome spectacles he had witnessed there. 'We must outlaw the Jewish danger,' he recorded afterward. 'But it will surface again in a few generations. There's just no antidote.'⁶²

There is evidence of how far his diary now veered from the truth. While it noted that Hitler expressed admiration for his latest speech attacking Churchill over the Athenia, Rosenberg recorded that Göring had told him that Hitler had remarked sarcastically that 'not even the entire Reichstag' had risen to such heights of rhetoric.⁶³ There are also other discrepancies, for example about the latest newsreel. 'The Führer,' Goebbels claimed in the diary, 'finds it very good.' But other sources reveal that Hitler found its mind-numbing sequences on a dance group in the opera, Queen Wilhelmina inspecting the Dutch air-raid defenses, and the Hungarian Labor Service insufferably tedious.⁶⁴ 'The newsreels are put together without inspiration or depth of interest,' he fulminated over lunch to Goebbels and a beaming Rosenberg in December. 'We

have in Germany an entire nation under arms, yet the newsreels take no notice.' Goebbels protested that Karl Ritter was making excellent patriotic movies like *Pour le Mérite*. 'Yes patriotic,' said Hitler, 'but not National Socialist!' They went at it hammer and tongs for twenty minutes before Dr Goebbels lapsed into a stricken silence. 'His appalling arrogance,' gloated Rosenberg, 'is now too much for even the long-suffering Führer to bear.' Goebbels hated being criticized by Hitler. 'But he has the right to criticize,' he loyally noted. 'He is a genius.'⁶⁵

One never knew, after all, who might read the diary's pages

In October 1939 Goebbels' new stately home at Lanke, the Haus am Bogensee, is complete. Once his stepson Harald comes, now a young paratrooper whose eyes have seen the horrors of war in Poland. On Goebbels' birthday Hitler invites them to tea; the Führer's face is also lined with worry—the war is not proceeding at all as he had planned.⁶⁶ Worries about financing Lanke still beset Goebbels.⁶⁷ He visits Magda, hospitalized once more with heart problems, and tells her of these irksome difficulties.⁶⁸ 'We have such money worries,' he writes.⁶⁹ He puts pressure on his budget chief Dr Ott to 'show more initiative' in dealing with the stubborn ministry of finance; this evidently works, because Ott shortly tells him that he has 'sorted out some of the problems in financing the new buildings.'⁷⁰ But they are a family again. Goebbels' marital problems seem over; at last the endless rows have faded from the diary's pages. He takes Magda out to Lanke for an afternoon, and they happily arrange the furniture.⁷¹ Once in November they rake over old embers, 'of which,' notes Goebbels, evidently scorched in the process, 'some are anything but agreeable.'⁷² Magda enrolls as a Red Cross nurse.⁷³ Slowly his domestic worries recede.

November 8, 1939 finds him in Munich listening once more to Hitler's speech on the putsch anniversary. From here one year before Goebbels had launched the Night of Broken Glass. By six P.M. Himmler, Bouhler, Rosenberg, Frank, Ribbentrop, and other dignitaries had joined him in the Bürgerbräu beerhall; this time they were surrounded by field-gray army uniforms. Hitler delivered an hour-long attack on Britain, pronounced that he was ready for five years of war if necessary, then finished abruptly—he had to hurry back to Berlin since his army commanders had asked to see him urgently the next morning about Case Yellow, the repeatedly postponed western campaign.

Goebbels joined the Führer in his special railroad car. At Nuremberg station he saw a telegram handed to Hitler: a mighty explosion, it said, had ripped through the beerhall just after they left, killing eight and injuring over sixty.⁷⁴ Goebbels was agog at his Führer's seemingly miraculous escape. If they had not left early, they would all surely have been killed. He really must be under God's protection, he privately concluded. 'He won't die until his mission is complete.'⁷⁵ At the ministry he directed all editors to comment along these lines. 'Urgent state business had called him back to Berlin,' the journalists were told. He forbade them to

D. I. on
Goebbels'

fears.
all the
intimates
he cannot
forget.

head go off
100. I
did feel
a pressure X 8

a 4 pressure
would Adolf
have felt a
premonition
on his own?
Quite likely
I had
burned up his
system over
the years
for just such
a capacity
Bund, he had
a talent for
such things.
anticipation.
Besides, the
electrocardiogram
now with him.

D. I. is instrument of — yes! Did
know certain that a game was
a lot of — a lot of — a lot of — a lot of

leaflets, with special editions of the selected passages prophesying the downfalls of, respectively, France and Britain.⁸⁶ In December he asked to see the astrological calendars for 1940 (and banned the lot the next day).⁸⁷

That winter he turned out millions of propaganda leaflets designed to subvert the French troops. Some asked the French soldiers how they'd like to die for Danzig. Others were shaped like a yellowing autumn leaf, and asked if they intended to die and fade away like this. Two clandestine radio stations started transmissions in French. He supervised their content closely.⁸⁸ 'I direct that enemy statesmen are no longer to be portrayed as figures of fun,' he wrote, 'but as cruel, vengeful tyrants. This goes for Chamberlain above all.'⁸⁹ He spared the Duke of Windsor from this campaign, as an investment for the future.⁹⁰ For Churchill he had both admiration and contempt. 'Riddled with lies and distortions,' he wrote after one Churchill broadcast. 'He's grown really old. But he's a cunning old fox all the same.'⁹¹

The topics of his ministerial conferences ranged from the ridiculous to the banal, from the supply of shoes, potatoes, diapers, coal, nail varnish, and cosmetics to the chronic shortcomings in the forces' mail.⁹² When London published an uncomfortably accurate account of Himmler's concentration camps, Goebbels commissioned a riposte about their forerunners, the British camps in the Boer War, and other colonial 'atrocities.'⁹³ He remained obsessed with the 'crime' of listening to foreign broadcasts. Despite draconian sentences it was clear from Gestapo reports that listening was on the increase.⁹⁴ British bombers had also started dropping millions of leaflets including a miniature *Völkischer Beobachter* wittily called the *Wölkißer Beobachter*, the Cloudy Observer. The first issue declared: 'The revolver-journalist Goebbels and the young hacks scribbling at his behest may have destroyed the proud craft of German journalism but they cannot assuage so easily the thinking man's natural hunger for news.' Its caricatures were apposite—like Hitler reading Karl Marx and Stalin browsing in *Mein Kampf*; and there was a moving obituary of General von Fritsch complete with a black border.⁹⁵ Goebbels conceded that the British propaganda was becoming more sophisticated.⁹⁶

His own press policies were still diffuse. He believed that he had lightened up on the press, directing: 'We must allow them a free rein.'⁹⁷ But the press directives reflect none of this. After a train crash near Friedrichshafen killed 132 passengers on December 22, and a second rail accident not far away killed fifty more the very next day, he ordered both news items suppressed.⁹⁸ He banned press coverage of the murder trials of several Poles for massacring ethnic Germans, as well as reports on the execution of rebellious Czech students, and other steps against their intelligentsia.⁹⁹ More enlightened were his bans on the printing of anonymous film or book reviews and, conversely, the names of defendants in minor court actions.¹⁰⁰ Many of these rules still hold in Germany today.

⊗ It's in a pet. All too soon after the new direction, he died! had to suppress news. So unfair!

Goebbels understands the impulse. Crime loves a tour. The forbidden was still tempting. "At least, let stop the cowards. they won't dare to gossip now."

⊗

WAR 325

As Christmas 1939 approached he warned editors not to delve into the ~~ancestry~~ of the Führer, his childhood, or his private life, and he rebuked them for drawing festive parallels between Adolf Hitler and Jesus Christ. 'The Führer does not desire such comparisons,' he said.¹⁰¹

37: The Principles of Propaganda

8
940

THE winter of 1939–40 wrote its name in the history of Europe with weeks of barbaric blizzards. The canals froze over; deprived of coal, the arms factories slowed down, and power stations dimmed.¹ The radiators in Goebbels' ministerial palace were stone cold. Playhouses and movie theaters closed.² The minister discussed with Albert Speer putting even stronger security fencing around Lanke, and gave orders for a two-month renovation of Schwanenwerder as well.³ The forests around Lanke were blanketed in snow. He took Magda and the children out on sleigh rides until the snow lost its magic for him. Judging from his diary the chattering children were his only joy. 'Children are at least quite honest,' he wrote. 'They say what they mean. Why can't we?'⁴ Visiting his mother at Rheydt he did what he could to help her to make ends meet. 'She brought me through the world war,' he reasoned. 'Now I'm going to see her through this one.' Still plagued with money problems, he persuaded Magda to pass the hat round among their wealthier friends.⁵ As Europe froze, Hitler's plans congealed as well. Once, on January 8, 1940, he invited Goebbels around for a cup of real coffee; but he made no attempt to discuss Yellow, his planned attack on France.⁶

Goebbels boasted to the Führer that their propaganda broadcasts were now going out in twenty-two foreign languages, including Gaelic, Afrikaans, Arabic, Hindustani and a babel of Balkan tongues, compared with four languages a year before. Their English-language broadcasts targeted the working classes, with an emphasis on the anti-plutocratic character of the war; the *News Chronicle*, Goebbels told Hitler, reported that fifty-four percent of the 'little people' in England admitted tuning in to his propaganda.⁷

He was ill at ease in war. His ministerial functions largely bored him. To the foreign journalists stationed in Berlin he offered both the carrot and the stick. He told Karl Bömer to open up luxurious retreats for these important gentlemen, with no expense spared to mollycoddle them; but he also recommended arresting one from time to time and saddling him with 'interminable court proceedings' as a salutary lesson.⁸ He also directed Bömer to ensure that Otto Strasser's autobiography was banned 'in every country in which it is slated to appear.'⁹ The book was not flattering about Goebbels.

SEVERAL times during those weeks he defined his basic propaganda

1940

tenets. Ordering Fritzsche to continue plugging the Athenia mystery, Goebbels lectured him cynically: 'Never lose sight of the fundamental principle of all propaganda, the constant repetition of the most effective arguments.'¹⁰ A month later he reiterated, 'Propaganda means repetition and still more repetition.'¹¹

Almost equal in importance came accuracy and promptness. Local people had been dismayed by the press's furtive reporting on the Friedrichshafen rail disaster.¹² Moreover, headlines had to match the story. A Berlin evening newspaper headlined the sinking of 'two British warships,' but they were only patrol boats.¹³ As the British air raids began during May 1940 Goebbels ruled that the local press was always to report casualty figures accurately. After those in one Berlin raid were first announced as six dead, then revised to thirty-six, he ordered the press to admit their error. 'The people must not start doubting the credibility of German reporting,' he explained.¹⁴

In overseas broadcasting he allowed greater objectivity than at home. He released the newsreel record of the last moments of the pocket battleship Graf Spee only for foreign consumption.¹⁵ With the increasing setbacks of 1941 Goebbels' policy of total truth became harder to enforce. When the navy in one day lost its three top submarine aces, Günter Prien, Joachim Schepke, and Otto Kretschmer, he ordered the news suppressed.¹⁶ He also began to deceive his own diary more systematically, telling it on November 19, 1941 that Ernst Udet had 'died suddenly,' although it is plain from the rest of the entry that he knew that the disaffected Luftwaffe general had died by his own hand.¹⁷

He saw little point in issuing official denials. 'Denials alone won't work,' he stated when the British started alleging Nazi atrocities in Poland. 'You've got to counter-attack'—but this did not necessarily mean counter-attacking on the same theme.¹⁸ 'Our principle must always be, never hold your tongue. Always say something. If need be, force our enemies to lose themselves in denials instead of spewing out still more lies.'¹⁹ German denials, he ruled, must always be categorical.²⁰ When an official asked in 1944 for formal denials of Soviet allegations about Nazi atrocities in Majdanek concentration camp, his ministry replied that none would be issued, 'as we shall be totally on the defensive in any discussion of this matter.'²¹

As for lying, Dr Goebbels laid down strict rules about when this was permissible: It was to be used only as a defensive tactic, never to fake successes; official organs like news agencies and radio stations were never to be used to spread lies, and their source was to be immediately camouflaged; and Germany's domestic radio and press channels must never be burdened with them—they were to be propagated only by their overseas broadcasters.²²

Perhaps his most enduring method was to pick up the enemy's most lethal propaganda weapon, like a ticking bomb, and fling it back in his face. During the humiliating British retreat to Dunkirk in May 1940, he made devastating use of the British soldiers' ditty about hanging out the

and if
repetition
kills the
soul, then
so be it,
I am
killing a
lot of
German souls.
To hell with
that. It is
more
important
that they
remain
patriots.

194

washing on the Siegfried Line.²³ For a while Churchill's famous V-for-victory device caused Goebbels headaches: the B.B.C. hammered it out in Morse code as the opening bar of Beethoven's fifth symphony, and it appeared overnight as graffiti on walls all over occupied Europe. In July 1941 he hit on the solution. 'I'm taking over that letter V for ourselves,' he announced in his diary, delighted at the simplicity of the solution. 'We're going to say it stands for a German victory. Like a dream!'²⁴ Three years later he would reload that 'V' and fire it back at London, this time standing for Vergeltung, revenge.

RIBBENTROP still stood in his way. On February 17, 1940 the British violated Norwegian neutrality to board an unarmed homebound German fleet auxiliary, the Altmark.²⁵ There were rich propaganda pickings for both sides, but Churchill won the race by five hours because the foreign ministry in Berlin sat on the dispatches.²⁶ Livid with rage Goebbels ordered his editors to concentrate on the Altmark incident. 'Even those newspapers normally accustomed to sparing the nerves of their readers are to use italic and bold faces,' he dictated.²⁷

The rivalry between the two ministries created odd situations. Goebbels had a large foreign section, with which he pursued his own foreign policy; he even had his own foreign intelligence agency, based in the stock exchange building in Hamburg and drawing information from its own agents all over neutral and occupied Europe.²⁸ Ribbentrop's foreign ministry had its own sections for press, cultural policies, and propaganda. Since Hitler had his own press chief, Dietrich, three conflicting 'official' viewpoints often appeared in the same editorial office.²⁹ Goebbels was unable to prevail upon Hitler to remedy this anomalous position. He had yet to outlive the harm done by the Lida Baarova episode.

He often saw Hitler however over lunch. On March 1, 1940 Hitler delivered a three-hour monologue to the gauleiters explaining why the weather still precluded any operations in the west. 'The Führer is a genius,' concluded Goebbels afterward. 'He's going to build the first Germanic people's empire.' He went on debating with Hitler until one A.M. that night. Back at Schwanenwerder it took him hours to get to sleep, what with the vivid plans and daydreams.³⁰ By a decree later that month he was confirmed as a permanent member of the Cabinet-like ministerial council for Reich defense along with Himmler, Bouhler, Milch, and Prussian finance minister Johannes Popitz.³¹ True, they had no idea what Hitler was planning. But Goebbels' trust in him was complete.

'Big question,' he wrote on April 2, 1940, referring to Yellow. 'When does it start?'

Like Ribbentrop, Hess, Dietrich, and every other top civilian he was totally in the dark about Hitler's real next operation, against Scandinavia.³² He continued to polemicize about the western powers' 'plans to enlarge the war' through the first week in April, while going about his other humdrum business.³³ He inspected a great new German invention,

the tape recorder, and he labored at his propaganda mills.³⁴ He had established several 'black' transmitters, to carry his subversive messages directly to millions of French and British radio listeners, eroding their confidence in victory and spreading rumor and confusion.³⁵ His French transmitters were codenamed Concordia and Humanité, the latter being a 'communist' station run by his brilliant broadcasting expert Dr Adolf Raskin.³⁶ His trump card was the Irish broadcaster William Joyce; although his overstated English accent earned him the unfriendly nickname Lord Haw-Haw, the mocking, intellectual content of his broadcasts gained him millions of listeners around the world.³⁷

At Gutterer's suggestion Dr Goebbels rocketed over the French lines millions of pornographic postcards: one, a translucent illustrated postcard entitled *Le Tommy, où est-il resté?* (Where's Tommy?) implied British hanky-panky at the rear while the French soldier was valiantly holding the line. The face of the postcard showed trenches, barbed wire, and a bloodstained French soldier; but held up to the light, the hidden picture revealed a nude man in bed with a woman, with a picture of her husband in French uniform on the wall.³⁸ Other rockets showered the French with familiar glossy black cartoons of cigarette paper that bore however the slogan, 'Why die for Danzig?' and with each sheet arguing that Britain had lured the French into this war. Hitler was dubious, reminding Goebbels that leaflet propaganda had not helped the Nazi party into power. But, he conceded, leafleting flights helped to conceal that the Luftwaffe was taking aerial photographs of vital enemy locations.³⁹

Goebbels meanwhile had become a personality of world stature. The American magazine *Life* invited him to contribute four articles: He dictated his own terms.⁴⁰ His propaganda could boast of many triumphs. In Warsaw the Nazis had captured the entire Polish diplomatic archives; with a little creative editing Goebbels published the documents to illustrate Roosevelt's meddling in European affairs. A French newspaper printed a photograph of Roosevelt's emissary Sumner Welles visiting the French prime minister; behind them was a map of Europe on which the French had already divided up Germany, Italy, and Yugoslavia among their neighbors. Goebbels reissued this provocative map, with a few deft embellishments, for the foreign press.⁴¹ But the world soon had an even more stunning Hitler coup to cope with.

NOT until late on April 8, 1940 did Hitler send for Goebbels and inform him, during a stroll in the chancellery gardens, that he would be invading Denmark and Norway at dawn the next day. Guns, troops, and ammunition were at that very moment entering Norwegian waters, concealed inside colliers.⁴² Asked by an astonished Dr Goebbels how he expected the United States to react to this new operation, Hitler responded that he did not really care. 'Material aid from them cannot come into play for about eight months, and manpower about a year and a half.' This did however make it essential to win the war before 1941 ended. To get them out of the way, Hitler had sent off all the foreign military attachés to

inspect Germany's western defenses. Only one, the Norwegian, had declined to go. Goebbels added to the smoke screen by organizing a mass meeting in Berlin that evening.

That Hitler pulled off this masterstroke on April 9, 1940, only hours before Churchill landed his own expeditionary force in Norway bestowed on him an ill-deserved aura of semi-righteousness. At lunch that day he again began bragging about a new Germanic empire. Goebbels warned editors not to mention their paratroop operations.⁴³ The German naval losses in the operation were severe. In Oslo fiord an ancient Norwegian coastal battery torpedoed the cruiser *Blücher* with heavy loss of life. Eberhard Taubert, one of Goebbels' best men, gave him an eye-witness account of this naval disaster ('As the *Blücher* went down there was one last infantryman on deck. He saluted and the survivors stood to attention. A cheer went up for the Führer').⁴⁴

Unexpectedly, the fighting grew stiffer, particularly at Narvik. When Hans Fritzsche warned that the British were fighting with great courage, Goebbels became quite thoughtful. 'We're going to have to take them more seriously,' he decided.⁴⁵

1940

38: Knocking out Front Teeth

JOSEPH Goebbels' life is already nine-tenths over. Hilde has just had her first day at school; life's little milestones are flashing past in a blur. His pride and joy are his four daughters. 'What a delight it is to see the clever, pretty little lasses slowly getting bigger,' he writes, unconsciously excluding his slow-witted infant son from his sentiments.¹ Once he finds that Magda has dressed Hellmut in a frilly silk blouse. 'That's not right for a boy,' he snaps at her, sending him off to change. 'We're not the Ribbentrops or Görings. People expect different of us!'²

Magda tells him that her father is ill. Goebbels merely sniffs. He lacks any feeling toward old Oskar Ritschel. She goes alone to the hospital in Duisburg.³ Gradually her father wastes away, losing forty pounds. He has evidently imbibed the evil draughts brewed by his son-in-law. 'Of course it isn't really a war against Britain and France at all,' Ritschel writes afterwards to his daughter, 'but a war between the Judaic and Germanic races; that is the essence of this gigantic struggle.'⁴

MANY desks at Goebbels' ministry were empty; half of his staff were away at the wars.⁵ Goebbels encouraged this war service, both for the battlefield experience that men like Gunter d'Alquén would bring back to the ministry and for the ideological stiffening that they brought to the front lines.⁶ He sent out regular hectographed letters disbursing the latest ministry gossip, chocolates, and cigarettes to each of his men in uniform.⁷ All the ministry's soldiers acquitted themselves well. Hanke fought his way through France as General Erwin Rommel's adjutant; Berndt succeeded him in Africa.⁸ Werner Naumann, an officer in Hitler's S.S. Leibstandarte, would return with a wound badge and other decorations from the Balkan campaign.⁹ Herbert Heiduschke, another Goebbels adjutant, would meet a paratrooper's death in Crete.¹⁰ G. W. Müller would be wounded in the advance on Murmansk in North Russia.¹¹ Moritz von Schirmeister, Goebbels' press officer since 1938, would not return from the eastern front to his desk until January 1942.¹²

The Norwegian campaign provided another coup for Goebbels, the capture of British documents proving that Churchill had himself, for all his talk about invasions of neutral countries, intended to invade Norway. 'That is a gift from the gods,' wrote a jubilant Goebbels. 'We missed disaster by hours. Churchill was waiting for reports of the English invasion—and the accursed Germans had got there first.'¹³ The inci-

1941

minating British documents were rushed into print. He ordered the press to follow up with leader articles, and had the captured British officers interviewed on the newfangled tape recorder lest Churchill deny the story.¹⁴ The British expeditionary force had behaved despicably, Hitler told Goebbels, looting and pillaging everywhere. In contrast to the Polish campaign, however, the Norwegians had not committed one atrocity—'They are after all a Germanic breed'—and he ordered the release of all Norwegian prisoners by way of recognition.¹⁵

Unlike Goebbels, Hitler had no special animus against the British. While Goebbels broadly defined their war aims as 'victory over the western plutocracies,'¹⁶ he often heard Hitler speak, within the four walls of his chancellery, of his fondness for the British and their empire. 'The Führer's intention,' recorded Goebbels, 'is to administer one knockout punch. Even so, he would be ready to make peace today, on condition that Britain stay out of Europe and give us back our colonies. . . . He does not want at all to crush Britain or to destroy her empire.'¹⁷ Hitler described the English leaders as criminals. 'They could have had peace on the most agreeable of terms,' he privately assured Goebbels. 'Instead they are fighting a war and shattering their empire to the core.'¹⁸ 'We are neither able nor willing to take over their empire,' added Hitler, reverting to this bitter theme. 'There are some people whom you can talk sense into only after you've knocked out their front teeth.'¹⁹

39 ✓ On the evening of May 9 Hitler boarded his train, bound for the western front. Goebbels showed up conspicuously at Göring's side at the premiere of Mussolini's play *Cavour* in Berlin, then returned to his deserted ministry building. At 5:35 A.M. on May 10 Yellow began, with Hitler's tanks and airborne troops invading the Low Countries and France. At eight Goebbels himself broadcast appeals to them not to resist. 'Our entire public must be convinced that Holland and Belgium did violate their neutrality,' he told his staff.²⁰ Learning that Churchill had now replaced Chamberlain, Goebbels penned this jubilant comment in his diary: 'Decks cleared!'²¹ Churchill launched the air war immediately, with raids on the Ruhr. Elsewhere twenty-four people, mostly children, were killed by bombs in Freiburg; in fact a stray Luftwaffe plane was to blame, but the harrowing stories from Freiburg were grist to Goebbels' mill.²²

16 He ordered the media to ignore Churchill's new cabinet except for the minister of information Duff Cooper. On Hitler's instructions the popular Queen Wilhelmina of the Netherlands was also spared.²³ As the powerful transmitter at Luxemburg fell into German hands Goebbels offered a substantial reward for the return of its missing valves; it later became one of his mightiest weapons in the radio propaganda war.²⁴ Initially he laid down the principle of total restraint in their reporting: There was to be no sensationalizing of the Wehrmacht's victories.²⁵ Hitler had briefed him on his real secret strategy, later known as the Manstein Plan, because as it unfolded on May 16 Goebbels noted that their mission now was to dupe the enemy into expecting a rehash of the old Schlieffen Plan.²⁶ He