

1940

spread rumors about fresh airborne landings, and took care not to rebut enemy stories about Nazi secret weapons.²⁷

Already he was preparing a new recording of massed choirs singing the Netherlands Thanksgiving Prayer, ready for victory.²⁸ As Hitler's armies began their historic wheel toward the north-west Goebbels reflected unabashedly: 'Since 1938 we have conquered seven European countries.'²⁹ As the king of Belgium conceded defeat Churchill broadcast his famous warning that Britain would fight on the beaches. 'He's still insolent,' decided Goebbels, 'but you can hear the perspiration trickling out of every frightened pore.'³⁰ He ordered it brought home to the British and the French that it was their governments which had declared this war on Germany, and he commissioned a special England victory fanfare for the German radio.³¹ 'They declared this war,' said Hitler, informing Goebbels of his intention of battering the French into submission. 'Now let them whimper for peace.'³²

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Get all of
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Goebbels
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GENERAL VON Reichenau would tell the ministry's staff, after Hitler had appointed his field marshals, 'The one who really won the French campaign was Goebbels.'³³ There was something in that. As the British expeditionary force fell back in disarray toward the beaches around Dunkirk, Goebbels' black transmitters were softening up the French public and doing all they could to generate among the *poilus* the feeling that they were already done for. He himself wrote many of the scripts for Concordia and Humanité, including a religious service of cunningly pacifist flavor. His purpose was simple: To spread alarm and despondency among the French. This he did by reporting rumors that Paul Reynaud's regime was fleeing Paris; by urging all French patriots to withdraw their bank savings immediately lest the Nazis confiscated the banks; and by broadcasting meaningless code-phrases to a non-existent French underground; Hitler directed him to talk freely about this fictitious 'Fifth Column.'³⁴ His transmitters gave helpful advice to the French on surviving the cholera epidemic (there was none); and how to hoard scarce food supplies. No true Frenchman, they warned, should trust the perfidious English. He spread rumors of peace talks, then claimed a day later that Britain had torpedoed them. Gutterer and Raskin faked the diary of a British soldier describing his sexual exploits among the wives of Paris. Other stations spread word of appalling atrocities, designed to choke the French roads with panic-stricken refugees. He brought to bear the main transmitters of Radio Cologne, Leipzig, and Stuttgart to beam these poisonous messages into enemy territory.³⁵

Learning that the turgid communist jargon of Humanité's scripts was turning off its listeners, Goebbels retrieved Wilhelm Kasper and Karl-Loew Albrecht from concentration camp.³⁶ Together with Ernst Torgler they helped Goebbels to foment communist unrest among the Paris working class. 'Magnificent,' he congratulated himself. 'Keep tipping oil onto the flames.'³⁷ Over the half-megawatt Deutschland-Sender his broadcasters warned that many of the Jewish refugees from Nazi Germany

to France and England were really Hitler agents in disguise.³⁸ Churchill ordered the internment of over twenty thousand Jewish refugees, a spectacular success for Goebbels' evil tongue.³⁹ Settling scores with the exiled Otto Strasser and Hermann Rauschning, he had his ministry issue 'official denials' that they too were members of the Nazi Fifth Column. Then he arranged for an anonymous well-wisher's telegram to reach Strasser tipping him off that the game was up.⁴⁰

As the black propaganda campaign gathered momentum, the roads behind the French lines were choked with terror-stricken refugees. Twice Hitler mentioned to Goebbels how moved he was by the French 'refugee misery' that he had seen.⁴¹ The minister instructed his staff never to tell outsiders of the part their tactics had played—'Even after the war,' he directed, 'it will be necessary to keep our operations secret.'⁴²

He stepped up the pressure on Britain too. William Joyce toured prison camps recruiting English-speakers.⁴³ Goebbels was in no doubt that Churchill would prove a tougher opponent than Reynaud. 'He will be England's gravedigger,' he prophesied. He warned the media not to speculate on Churchill's parentage without cast-iron evidence.⁴⁴ Normal libels would not suffice against this man: Perhaps monster-libels would. He told Joyce to announce that Churchill was planning to torpedo the liner carrying fleeing Americans back to the United States ('I wouldn't put it past the old rogue anyway,' he commented, as though that were justification enough).⁴⁵

In Churchill, Goebbels had met his match. Before his marveling eyes, the 'old rogue' converted the disaster of Dunkirk into a propaganda triumph for England. Churchill's legend of the Little Ships fired the imagination of the world. 'You can't help admiring the brazen effrontery with which they are putting out this monstrous lie,' wrote Goebbels. 'There's no doubt that they've managed to halt the avalanche in public opinion that was developing.'⁴⁶ Goebbels was dismayed to hear from d'Alqu  n and Hippler that not only were the French troops loyally covering the British retreat, but that whatever the French were saying to the contrary the Tommies were fighting with unexpected bravery. 'The British,' he realized, 'are going to be a tough nut to crack.'⁴⁷

Hitler staged the surrender talks in the forest at Compi  gne, the site of Germany's humiliation in 1918. Telephoning Goebbels that evening he described with relish the French delegation's consternation upon finding him there in person.⁴⁸

Broadcasting over the B.B.C., Churchill announced that Britain would fight on alone. 'That idiot is plunging all England into misfortune,' wrote Goebbels. He ordered his black transmitters realigned on England. He did not share his F  hrer's maudlin affection for the English. He found the early British war movie *The Lion has Wings* so ludicrous that he had it shown to the press corps and public audiences in Berlin for laughs.⁴⁹

Hitler however hesitated. Goebbels could see that he hated the idea of pursuing the defeated British army across the English Channel. In an interview with American journalist Karl von Wiegand the F  hrer once

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1940

again insisted, for English listeners' consumption, that he did not desire the destruction of their empire. This conciliatory attitude suited neither Goebbels nor Churchill, who sent his bombers to Berlin on the night of the Compiègne armistice ceremony. Goebbels drove over to see the resulting damage at nearby Babelsberg and admitted at the next morning's press conference that there had been fatalities. When Hitler phoned later that day Goebbels pleaded in vain for retaliatory raids.⁵⁰

The big question, he added, was how now to proceed against Britain. 'The Führer does not really want to press on. But he may well have to. If Churchill stays on, assuredly.' Göring set up a plan for a mass air attack on Britain, but Hitler kept postponing it.⁵¹ The British bombers kept poking at Germany. Churchill, fumed Goebbels at the end of June, 'is just trying to provoke us. But the Führer doesn't intend to respond, yet.'⁵²

A telegram from Hitler curtailed his tour of the battlefields in France—he was to report to the interim Führer HQ in the Black Forest the next day, July 2, 1940. They decided that Hitler should stage a triumphant homecoming to Berlin that Saturday, July 6, and address the Reichstag two days later.⁵³ Hitler would then offer Britain one last chance. Failing that, he still believed that he could defeat Britain in four weeks. 'The Führer however does not want to destroy the empire,' Goebbels noted, 'because everything it loses will accrue to foreign powers and not to us.'⁵⁴ Goebbels was clearly unhappy with Hitler's procrastination: He recorded that it would be a tough decision to sell to the German people, though no doubt the Führer would bring it off. The tenor of his coming speech, Hitler had said, would be magnanimity. What he did not mention to Goebbels was that he had just begun staff studies on a war with the Soviet Union.⁵⁵

Goebbels hated the idea of offering an easy peace to Britain. Dramatic events came to his rescue. Under the armistice terms Hitler had just allowed the defeated French nation to retain her powerful battle fleet, though disarmed and under German supervision. Concerned that the Nazis might somehow seize the biggest warships, lying at anchor at Oran (Mers el-Kébir), Churchill ordered them sunk on July 3, the day after Hitler and Goebbels met. Over a thousand French sailors died in the ruthless British naval bombardment. This incident dominated a quarter of Goebbels' entire domestic propaganda output for the next four days, while the personal abuse leveled at Churchill equaled the savagery first displayed after the Altmark incident.⁵⁶ Goebbels' private admiration for Churchill rose, as his diary shows. Moreover, the British were still bombing Germany. Hitler however still restrained his own bomber force.⁵⁷ 'The Führer,' the minister marveled, 'has the patience of an angel.' He directed the press to focus their attack on Churchill and his clique alone. This was not easy, as the entire British press was 'chordling with pleasure' about Oran.⁵⁸

BERLIN's reception for Hitler on Saturday July 6, 1940 was the most spectacular that Goebbels ever staged.⁵⁹ He had issued a million swastika

His dream was to have England and America consciously on his side against the Soviet Union. He would offer great advantages to them. What he did not understand is that while he would enjoy such advantages, Roosevelt and Churchill would not.

AC 1940
 flags to the crowds lining the route, and he himself broadcast the excited running commentary as the train bearing the conquering warlord hauled into the station at three P.M. to an accompanying cacophony of church bells, factory sirens, and steam whistles. Once inside the chancellery Goebbels asked Hitler what he had decided. He now learned that the British fleet's assault on the French at Oran had unhinged all of Hitler's plans. 'He had his speech almost complete,' recorded Goebbels, 'when the attack occurred. It has brought about an entirely new situation. Churchill is a raving lunatic who has burned all his boats behind him.' 'Nevertheless,' Hitler lectured him, 'we must be guided not by hatred but by common sense.'⁶⁰

AC
 Postponing the speech, Hitler came out to Lanke that Sunday, and played with the Goebbels children. Several times during the coming week Goebbels lunched with him at the chancellery and heard him daydream about his postwar construction plans. He was going to build an autobahn from Carinthia in southern Austria all the way up to Norway's northernmost cape, with a gigantic new naval base near Trondheim like Britain's Singapore. Darré, another lunch guest, recorded, 'They couldn't decide whether to call it Atalantis (Himmler's suggestion), Atlantis (Frank), Northern Light (Ley), or Stella Polaris (Goebbels).'⁶¹ But these were castles in the air because, Goebbels noted, Hitler was still unwilling to deliver the final blow. Announcing that he was going to retire to the Berghof to think things over he left for Bavaria that evening.⁶²

JUST as Hitler hankered after his peacetime hobby of architecture, so Dr Goebbels dreamed of retiring to a country estate and firing off magisterial newspaper editorials.⁶³

mar 26
 With the birth of *Das Reich*, his new national weekly magazine for the intelligentsia, part of this dream came true. He contributed a highly paid, regular leading article which would come to be quoted around the world as a real sensor of Nazi policies. Appearing every Saturday from May 26, 1940, *Das Reich* became the flagship of his journalistic career.⁶⁴ It was well designed, its prose was literate, its photographs superb. It was particularly popular with the officer corps.⁶⁵ Its circulation hovered around a million—'a rare publishing success for which I was not entirely blameless,' Goebbels wrote.⁶⁶

The large circulation involved simultaneous printing in several centers, and this in turn meant that his manuscript had to be delivered by the previous Monday. He began drafting it a week ahead, initially with a schoolboy dread, then with growing enthusiasm as it took shape; he devoted inordinate energy to checking dates, facts, and quotations from the Greek and Latin classics, until he was ready to dictate the final draft just before the weekend. Its influence on German morale was unquestionable; it was a weekly shot in the arm—celebrating successes, explaining setbacks, justifying persecutions, promising retaliation, predicting victory. Toward the end, a Goebbels article would present eloquent arguments from antiquity or parables from the party's struggle for

power which briefly lightened the lowering darkness of defeat. After reading the Goebbels leader in *Das Reich* on the day before Hitler died an army lieutenant-general in British captivity could only say, 'They [the Nazis] *must* have something up their sleeves!'⁶⁷

While Hitler stayed brooding at the Berghof, his plans upset, Goebbels boosted Berlin's uncertain morale by staging a homecoming parade for one of its infantry divisions. He shrilled words of welcome through loudspeakers, contrasting this scene with those of 1918: 'You soldiers return to find your country just as you left it. At your head stands the same Führer, on your buildings flutters the same flag, your people are still imbued with the same spirit and the same determination.' 'All we need now,' he triumphed in his diary afterward, 'is Britain's capitulation, total victory, and a lasting peace. . . . Who can still harbor any doubt of the outcome of this gigantic struggle?'⁶⁸ The mere statement of the question suggests that, way down in his own unfathomed depths, Goebbels was himself beginning to doubt.

As the infantry marched in Berlin, Gutterer remarked that the same hordes of Jews were to be seen loitering up and down Kurfürstendamm.⁶⁹ Goebbels had to admit it was true. The Jewish problem still ran like a poisonous thread through all his waking thoughts. He had told Gutterer in February 1940 to organize raids on Berlin Jews suspected of hoarding foodstuffs.⁷⁰ He had no qualms about the murderous treatment that the S.S. were meting out to the Jews, the clergy, and the intelligentsia in Poland.⁷¹ More than once over the next five years he reflected that for top Nazis like himself there was now no going back: Winning total victory had become literally a matter of life and death for them. In one cryptic diary entry in January 1940 he reminded himself, 'If there *were* any going back, then one would too easily become faint-hearted. . . . That goes for our policies in Poland too. We simply must not lose this war.'⁷² Like other top Nazis, he was noticeably careful not to spell out what those policies were. When a well-disposed Polish journalist sent him details of certain 'episodes' in Poland, he noted, 'These could be pretty lethal for us at this moment,' and he had the informant taken into custody for a while.⁷³ A few weeks later he learned that the Russians were disposing of the Jews in their half of Poland 'in their own way.' 'So much the better for us,' was his cryptic comment.⁷⁴

He had no misgivings about euthanasia either. After hearing Philipp Bouhler reporting to Hitler on the ongoing operation to liquidate Germany's hospital population of mental defectives, Goebbels agreed that this was 'so necessary,' but he made a note that the whole thing was secret and running into difficulties.⁷⁵ Over lunch a week later he heard Himmler tell Hitler that in some parts of occupied Poland the Jews had set up their own administration and were imposing a cruel regime on their own race. 'That's how the Jews are,' he commented, 'and that's how they'll be for ever more.'⁷⁶ Hitler reassured him in June that they would deal swiftly with the Jews after the war.⁷⁷ Commenting on the Jews'

disrespectful behavior during the infantry parade, Goebbels announced that he had decided, no doubt in his capacity as gauleiter, to pack all Berlin's Jews—he put their number at 62,000—off to Poland within eight weeks of the cessation of hostilities. The city's police had already developed the necessary plans.⁷⁸ Later still, Hitler revealed to him once again his own preferred final solution, to deport all of Europe's Jews after the war to Madagascar, currently a French colony. 'That will become a German protectorate under a German police governor.'⁷⁹

HITLER had now put the finishing touches to his Reichstag speech. He returned to Berlin on July 19, 1940 in high spirits, and outlined its salient points to his lunch guests, including Goebbels. He would issue a short, terse peace offer to Britain without spelling out any precise terms but with the clear implication that this was his last word, and it was now for London to decide.⁸⁰ Goebbels hoped that Churchill might even resign. That evening, he told his staff, Britain's fate would be in the balance.⁸¹ He directed all his English-language radio stations to soften up British public opinion.⁸² He now had no fewer than five black radio stations, among them the New British Broadcasting Station, which beamed William Joyce's messages to England via three shortwave transmitters; an 'amateur' Radio Caledonia, pumping out Scottish nationalist propaganda; another transmitter aimed at Welsh nationalists; a medium-wave transmitter beaming socialist slogans to the British working class; and Concordia Plan P, which had soothing words for British Christian pacifists and regularly broadcast prayer services for peace.⁸³

All of these megawatts failed to deflect Britain from her purpose. A rude answer to Hitler's peace offer was broadcast almost immediately over the B.B.C. by Sefton Delmer ('one of Putzi Hanfstaengl's discoveries,' as Goebbels caustically labeled him).⁸⁴ To Hitler's consternation the British bombing continued that night. 'For the moment,' recorded Goebbels, seeing him the next day, 'the Führer does not want to accept that that is indeed Britain's response. He is still minded to wait awhile. After all, he appealed to the British people and not to Churchill.'⁸⁵ Agreeing that they could afford to wait, Goebbels warned editors not to overstate Britain's rebuff.⁸⁶

So Germany waited. He himself doubted whether Britain really was interested in peace. She would not come to her senses until she had taken the first blows. 'She can't have any idea of what she's in for,' he reflected.

Churchill responded with more bombs, but Lord Halifax broadcast a statement that Goebbels at first mistook for just an unctuous sermon, only to learn the next day that Hitler recognized it as most definitely Britain's final outright rejection of his offer.⁸⁷

Secretly, Goebbels was rather pleased. 'Everybody,' he wrote, meaning himself, 'was afraid that Britain would grasp the hand of peace extended by the Führer.'⁸⁸ Hitler told him that he too would 'very soon' start massive bombing raids. 'The big question,' Goebbels detected, 'is *when*. . . Only the Führer can decide that.'⁸⁹ He instructed his black

* We had come to the conclusion that in terms of foreign policy, Madagascari could not be a normal state.

1940

KNOCKING OUT FRONT TEETH 339

transmitters to start generating panic in Britain, for instance broadcasting official-sounding English guidelines on what to do when the Nazi mass air raids began; to add authenticity each bulletin was to start with blistering attacks on the top Nazis. Once again his announcers were to counsel the enemy public to withdraw their life savings and to hoard foodstuffs, and to buy jewelry and valuables against inflation.⁹⁰

It was now late July 1940. Göring was now wearing a new uniform, that of Reichsmarschall. Everyone was ready for the blitz to begin—except Hitler.⁹¹

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had over the war,

Aug 1940

39: Breaking Even

THE short campaigning weeks of the English summer flitted past unused. Hitler allowed Reichsmarschall Göring's two thousand bombers to tackle only Britain's war industries, shipping, and ports. Dr Goebbels hungered for the day when they would be unleashed on London.

Britain's intransigence dominated his diaries. 'Feelers from here to Britain without result,' he recorded on the first day of August 1940. 'Via Spain as well. London is looking for a catastrophe.'¹

He began his own war in the air. There was no limit to his evil inspiration. His mischief-making black transmitters went into stage two of their campaign, advising British listeners on how to defend themselves against Nazi poison-gas attacks, and how to make Molotov cocktails (a few days later the same transmitters warned that some designs had been found spontaneously igniting).² Listeners were lectured on how to detect the 'Fifth Columnists' in Britain.³ The transmitters 'denied' rumors that a hundred thousand British army uniforms had fallen into Nazi hands at Dunkirk, then spread word that thousands of agents wearing these uniforms had already been parachuted into Britain.⁴ Then they began broadcasting strings of meaningless ciphers to these non-existent Fifth Columnists.⁵ Studying photographs in British society magazines Goebbels devised a particularly cruel scheme to alienate the working class: His transmitters announced that Churchill was providing funds for twenty thousand working-class children to be evacuated to Canada like the privileged children of the rich and influential; families were to take their children to a meeting place in the center of London, on the basis of first-come, first-saved. 'There's going to be some pushing and shoving there,' cackled the minister heartlessly.⁶ His 'English' transmitters also ordered all gas masks to be handed in for special filters to be installed.⁷ They followed with educational broadcasts for those English listeners who had not yet witnessed German air force *Schrecklichkeit* at first hand.⁸ The effect, if any, of this black propaganda on the British population is not known.

In the air war however the British were now taking the initiative, although Göring's bomber bases were much closer to London than the British were to Berlin. Churchill sent his squadrons to Hamburg and announced it had been 'pulverized.'⁹ The American press seized upon

Aug 4, 1940

that word. Goebbels flew two planeloads of neutral journalists to the port to see for themselves that it was undamaged¹⁰

Goebbels began to feel ill. He felt overworked and undernourished, his nerves were frayed, his eyes swam from scanning the incoming dispatches for any signs that Britain was collapsing.¹¹ The doctors diagnosed a nervous complaint resulting from overwork and vitamin deficiency.¹² The Gestapo reported gloomily that the German public was keyed up, waiting for Göring's Grand Slam, but that many people secretly feared they were in for a second winter at war¹³

Hitler returned to Berlin on August 4. He had decided, he explained to Goebbels, to launch sudden and unheralded mass air raids on Britain and he ordered the propaganda barrage to be intensified. Goebbels postponed a trip he had been planning to occupied Norway and turned the barrage up to half-volume.¹⁴ But still Hitler held back his bombers. He explained that the Reichsmarschall was still testing the sinews of Britain's defenses. 'If the losses we sustain are within reason,' wrote Goebbels after seeing Hitler again on the sixth, 'then the operation will proceed. If they are not, then we shall try new ways. Invasion not planned,' he noted almost casually.* 'But we shall hint at it subliminally in our propaganda to confuse the enemy.'

Goebbels briefed only a few of his staff on Hitler's startling disclosure. 'The Führer has still not ordered the air attack on Britain,' he noted after a further visit to him that day. 'He's still rather hesitant.' Anxious to exculpate his vacillating idol in his diary, Goebbels conceded: 'It is a tricky decision.'¹⁵ And it was: Bombing London would finally close the door to peace. Churchill knew this too, and this was one reason why his bombers were trying to provoke Hitler. Goebbels found himself his unwitting ally. 'The people,' he wrote privately, meaning himself, 'are afraid that we're missing the opportune moment.' Over lunch on the eighth Hitler however said that the weather was not good enough.¹⁶

To Goebbels' dismay Churchill's information machine proved slicker than his as the battle of Britain began. He did not mind that Churchill inflated his victories, claiming fifty-three Luftwaffe planes when the real total was ten; but the British announced this victory in a rising crescendo of fourteen bulletins issued during the day, while the German High Command was still ponderously releasing one.¹⁷ Goebbels reminded the world that Churchill had frankly confessed to lying his way out of awkward situations in the earlier war.¹⁸

Hitler still hesitated to bomb London. Goebbels resorted in his diary to his now threadbare palliative: 'The Führer will surely seek out the right moment and then strike accordingly.'¹⁹ Göring decided to launch Eagle Day, the mass attack on southern England, on the thirteenth; but

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* Thereby settling one major historical controversy. This author has long maintained, e.g. in *Churchill's War* (London, 1987) and *Hitler's War* (London, 1991), 311ff, that Hitler never intended to invade Britain and that Operation Sea Lion was only strategic deception. Traditional historians have been slow to accept this.

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Sept 3, 1940

needed what he called an alibi, to justify in advance the *Schrecklichkeit* which the Luftwaffe was about to inflict on London. Hitler had ruled out an invasion of Britain by force as unnecessary. Both men expected a walk-over once the Luftwaffe really got at London. Goebbels began planning ahead with Gutterer for the occupation of London, nominating first his police major Walter Titel, of his war operations staff, and then Dr Friedrich Mahlo, head of his tourism section, as chief of the England task force, and determining which buildings, like the British Broadcasting Corporation, it would need to seize.²⁸

While Berlin now prepared for the worst, removing priceless paintings to safety and digging in flak batteries around the city, Hitler and his propaganda minister debated endlessly the central question: Whether bombing alone would force the British to their knees. Goebbels eschewed any opinion, but wondered privately how much longer London had before the onslaught began. Hitler however was awaiting a response to his further peace feelers, extended through Washington, Stockholm and—via Rudolf Hess's aristocratic contacts—Scotland.

As frustrated as Goebbels at Hitler's forbearance, Churchill intensified his raids on Berlin. Finally his methods worked. Inaugurating the second Winter Relief fund Hitler and Goebbels spoke on September 4 in the Sport Palace; and here Hitler threatened that, if the attacks continued, his Luftwaffe would respond. 'I shall rub out their cities!' he rasped into the microphone. To Goebbels' astonishment, the speech had no apparent impact on Whitehall. In retrospect this was not surprising: Like Goebbels at Lanke, Churchill had a country funk-hole at Dytchley in Oxfordshire where he repaired whenever his Intelligence services alerted him that London was to be the Luftwaffe's target. The prime minister wanted London bombed to bring in the Americans, to take the weight of enemy air attacks off his fighter and radar defenses, and to spite the peace movement that was now seriously threatening his own war leadership. He cheered silently each time his capital was bombed, as indeed did Goebbels each time Berlin was visited by the Royal Air Force.²⁹

Meanwhile Reichsmarschall Göring had set off to the Channel coast to command his pompous air armadas against London. He had prepared a three-day saturation bombing of London. September 5 brought ideal bombing weather but Hitler, clutching at hopes of peace, still procrastinated. That night the British bombed Berlin again, killing fifteen people. Lunching with Hitler on the sixth Goebbels found his patience exhausted. 'The Führer,' he recorded, 'is fed up. He clears London for bombing. It is to begin tonight.' Goebbels certainly did not discourage him, and that night what he would call the blitz began. Mapping out his own tactics in advance he confided to his diary, 'We're expecting the British to launch a major air strike against Berlin tonight [the seventh]. When it comes we'll kick up one hell of a hullabaloo—and then we'll flatten London with day and night raids.' These would go on around the clock for three days. He only hoped that the weather held out.

Sure enough the British bombers returned. Thus Churchill and Hitler

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rose to each other's bait. Göring again sent his bombers over London that afternoon. 'Let's see now how long the nerves of the English can take it,' wrote Goebbels. He directed William Joyce and the black 'English' transmitters to spread panic; and he told the 'straight' media that they were to stick to the official version that the Luftwaffe was only attacking military targets.³⁰ On Sunday the eighth, Reuters agency announced that seven hundred Londoners had died the day before.³¹ As Hitler visited the Goebbels family at Schwanenwerder on Sunday night, Churchill's bombers threw another modest punch at Berlin. The propaganda minister ordered their overseas services to exaggerate the results wildly to generate fresh alibis for what was to come.³² The *New York Times* headlines read '1,500 NAZI PLANES BOMB LONDON' on Sunday, and 'MIGHTY NAZI AIR FLEET AGAIN BOMBS LONDON—DOCKS AND PLANTS HIT, FIRES RAGE' on the following day. London, it seemed to Goebbels, was one huge inferno. How long could its citizens take it?

Over lunch on the tenth Hitler, still undecided, again asked the one question that mattered: Would Britain give in? 'The military share my viewpoint,' recorded Goebbels: 'A city of eight million cannot stand this for long. . . . We have wiped the smirk off their lordships' faces. We shall thrash them until they whimper for mercy.'³³

That night scattered British bombs fell around the Reichstag. Damage was almost non-existent. Annoyed that Churchill's raids were proving so puny, Goebbels ordered his pyrotechnic experts to stage more convincing fires on top of the Brandenburg Gate, Berlin's famous landmark, and then summoned the press photographers—'to supply,' as he unblushingly told his diary, 'an alibi for our own coming massive raid on the London government quarter.'³⁴ When a German bomb shortly after damaged one wing of Buckingham Palace in London, Goebbels directed his agencies to claim that there were 'secret military targets' near by.³⁵ The neutral press duly equated this raid with the British raid on the Reichstag. 'Thus we are not barbarians,' Goebbels congratulated himself. 'We are just two superpowers knocking the living daylights out of each other.'³⁶

Hitler too was taken in. Furious about the raid on the Brandenburg Gate and his Reichstag he told Goebbels that he was now going to blast Churchill's ancient parliament to smithereens. Together they listened to the prime minister broadcast that evening. It was an insipid speech in Goebbels' opinion, riddled with vulgar abuse of his beloved Führer. 'Poor fool,' he commented: 'In his impotent fury he flails at a genius of whose greatness he has not the slightest inkling.'³⁷ Churchill however was every inch a match for him. Although he too knew from codebreaking that no German invasion was planned, he predicted a date for the event: It was an old but effective propaganda trick, raged Goebbels—Churchill could then claim a victory when no invasion came.³⁸ His admiration for Britain's indomitable prime minister grew. 'You can't help respecting him,' he wrote, 'in his bulldog way.'³⁹

—Despite all Göring's efforts the British air defenses seemed intact. On September 15 the Luftwaffe dropped two hundred tons of bombs on

Oct 1940

London, and lost forty-three planes in the battle. Churchill coolly inflated that figure to 155. 'Churchill has got to cheat,' Goebbels reasoned, 'because the devastation in London is so appalling.'⁴⁰ The Luftwaffe's losses faced him with a problem however. He had virtuously ruled only ten days earlier that even if the Luftwaffe was worsted on some days, its losses were to be faithfully reported.⁴¹ But now the Luftwaffe's impotence was becoming something of a liability to Germany's image. For a start, all German radio stations now had to shut down at ten P.M. to avoid helping enemy bombers.⁴² Unabashed, the obese Reichsmarschall allowed the world's press to report that he had personally flown over the blazing streets of London in a Stuka dive bomber. Goebbels forbade the German press to print the story ('for obvious reasons').⁴³ He told his black transmitters to remark on the luxury air raid shelters, complete with armchairs and dance floors, installed for London's plutocrats beneath the Grosvenor House hotel.⁴⁴ 'Not yet,' was his terse assessment when his department heads asked whether the British capital was entering its death throes.⁴⁵

In mid-September 1940 Hitler still hoped that prolonging this blitz would do the trick. 'If eight million inhabitants go crazy,' he said, 'that can bring about a catastrophe. If we get good weather and can neutralize the enemy air force, then even a small-scale invasion can work wonders.'⁴⁶ Over lunch on the twenty-third however Goebbels heard him admit that they were nowhere near achieving air superiority.⁴⁷ The Luftwaffe was losing its finest crews, as its losses over southern England mounted. Hitler compared it with a boxing match. After slogging on for round after round, one pugilist might suddenly slump to the canvas.⁴⁸ To Goebbels however the London blitz began to reek of uglier examples in history, and Major Rudolf Wodarg, his Luftwaffe liaison officer, put the same fear into words. 'London,' he said, 'is turning into a Verdun of the air.'⁴⁹

GOEBBELS was not really prepared for this situation. He spent October 1940 in the doldrums, becalmed in a silent, unreasoning hatred of Ribbentrop, of Dietrich, of the plutocrats in London, and of the Jews. He was waiting—waiting for the air war to end, waiting for the renovation of No. 20 Hermann-Göring Strasse to be completed, waiting for Magda, yet again, to give birth. 'Mothers in labor are like soldiers on the battlefield,' he decided.⁵⁰ The British bombers remorselessly gnawed away at Germany. Often a single nuisance raider triggered a stampede by four and a half million Berliners into their makeshift shelters.⁵¹ Berlin's flak defenses were strengthened. On October 2 a detonation not far from Lanke marked the end of one British bomber. Goebbels saw the flattened pile of twisted metal the next day and the charred remains of the three aviators, and shuddered.⁵² The air staff now asked Goebbels not to announce when the British missed their targets. Goebbels was baffled. 'First we give them the run of our air waves,' he commented, referring to the ten P.M. radio curfew, 'and now we are voluntarily to abstain from rebutting their propaganda lies.'⁵³

→ R.T.
Only slowly did we come to realize that this bombardment saved the R.K. People were never enabled to die in good conscience.

↓
D.T. another side of the picture

sees himself in the charred silence of the corpses.

He traveled to France, at Göring's invitation. He took tea in the Edouard Rothschild palace—the château, replete with pheasants, was now a Luftwaffe command post—and relished the irony of the situation.⁵⁴ Fatter than ever and aglitter with medals, Göring showed him round Paris. They swapped pet-hate stories about Ribbentrop; Goebbels noticed how many German uniforms there were as they strolled along the boulevards and enjoyed the sensation their presence was creating. At the Casino de Paris the crippled gauleiter goggled at the open display of such statuesque nudity. 'We could never put on a show like that in Berlin,' he decided.⁵⁵ Visiting Field Marshal Hugo Sperrle, the bulky, monocled Third Air Fleet commander at Deauville, Goebbels decided that like Göring he too was a real comrade, a devil of a fellow, and his men were just *fabelhaft*.⁵⁶

It is worth emphasizing those contemporary words, because in July 1944 he would recall only the sumptuousness of this peacetime international watering hole—how Sperrle had crammed his face with caviar canapés and roared, 'In fourteen days all life in London will have been extinguished. . . . I am telling you. They'll suffocate in their own crap.' He plied the propaganda minister with agents' reports, one of which spoke of the fine ladies being forced to pee in Hyde Park as London's water mains ran dry. Goebbels voiced skepticism (or so he claimed in 1944) that that would be sufficient inconvenience to bring down a great world empire.⁵⁷

WHILE Dr Joseph Goebbels is staring at naked showgirls in October 1940 in Paris, his wife, pregnant in Berlin with their sixth child, has had to return to the clinic with heart problems.⁵⁸ It is mid-November before she is discharged. Her father writes to her: Facing renewed surgery, he is obliged to draw up a will; he is leaving to her the estate at Remagen—he does not mention Joseph at all.⁵⁹

Magda's life is anything but easy, and for all his attempts at camouflage Goebbels' diary cannot conceal it. A candle still glows dimly in her heart for Karl Hanke. Her son Harald is now a troublesome adolescent; perhaps the paratroops will make a man out of him.⁶⁰ Goebbels privately reflects that it could do wonders for his image if Harald should die in action. Of his daughters, his favorite is still Helga.⁶¹ For more mature female company, he invites the Countess Faber-Castell out to Lanke with her husband as soon as Magda has gone; the countess is a captivating twenty-three-year-old whom he has known for many years. She entertains him with chansons and music—'She is bewitching,' writes Goebbels wistfully.⁶²

Once Magda struggles briefly out of bed to rejoin him. 'When you see eye to eye with her,' writes Goebbels, 'she is a regular guy and a real comrade.'⁶³ It is the kind of praise his diary has lavished only on Göring or Sperrle before. On his forty-third birthday she presents him with a fifth daughter, Heide. His family is now complete.

On Magda's birthday in November 1940 Hitler himself turns up for her little dinner party and they proudly show him over their now finished

as they are
watching
the ladies
at the
Casino de Paris

140

✓

ministerial mansion at No. 20 Hermann-Göring Strasse. No fewer than 117 construction workers have been laboring on it during these historic weeks.⁶⁴ Thick carpets, tapestries, and velvet or silken wall hangings supplied by the exquisite United Workshops of Munich deaden every sound. In the largest salon are seats for 140; the same number can sit at tables in the Blue Gallery, with eighty-two more at the top table. The huge desk in his study has cost 8,417 marks, around two thousand dollars.⁶⁵ The globe of the world is modeled on one he has seen in the radio building but—given his waiflike, five-foot-four stature—it is a more low-slung model. In the garden are marble sculptures by Professor Fritz Klimsch and a bronze nude by Arno Breker. All the telephones are white; on his instructions all have had their 'engaged' indicator-lamps removed. He does not want it to be known when he is telephoning.⁶⁶

He has commissioned no less lavish works in the ministry building itself, on Wilhelms Platz. Work is suspended briefly in November as the interior decorators are called away to work on the special luxurious trains of Hitler and Göring. Goebbels orders that there are to be no flushing toilets in the space next to his personal radio studio, to avoid inappropriate noises during his broadcasts to the Greater German Reich.⁶⁷

At the same time nearly two hundred sub-contractors have labored to complete his mansion at Lanke, the Haus am Bogensee (which stands to this day). He has converted the former guardhouse used by his bodyguard Kaiser into a handsome oblong wood cabin fifty feet long and thirty feet wide, as a guesthouse for two families. The architect's file contains his instructions dated August 6, 1940 for incubators and bird-tables to be erected in the surrounding woods.⁶⁸ The new gatehouse will cost thirty thousand marks; alterations to the cinema, drawing room, and Magda's private bedroom one hundred thousand; a twenty-five foot by sixty-five foot swimming pool, twenty-four thousand; and a children's wing, 140,000. By the end of October 1940 the grand total cost of work in hand is 2,663,052.58 marks. Mosquito control, road building, and radio equipment will bring the total to three million. Understandably his diary betrays a certain nervousness as the bills mount.⁶⁹ The diary cannot conceal his eighteenth-century tapestries purchased from France and the Low Countries, nor the paintings by Van Dyck, nor the Goya obtained from 'French private property;' but all these are no doubt paid for by the ministry.⁷⁰

Ministers it seems are endemically blind to their own corruption. Through his friend Max Winkler, Dr Goebbels controls the film industry. Early in November he notes that Winkler has seen Göring and has taken care of the Lanke problem.⁷¹ At about the same time Winkler gives him a 'belated' birthday present of two magnificent black Trakehn geldings, with a matching carriage. No doubt coincidentally Goebbels 'in conjunction with the film industry' donates to Winkler a garden cottage worth fifty thousand marks upon his birthday.⁷² By November 30 checks totaling 2.3 million marks have been paid toward the cost of Lanke. Thus he settled his debts over Lanke and his tax liabilities at one stroke. 'It

was high time,' he wrote. 'If I were to die now, I'd just about break even. A fine reward for twenty years' service to the fatherland. My family would be in for quite a shock.'⁷³

RETURNING from France, Goebbels had dictated to his staff his belief that London was bluffing.⁷⁴ But each side was wallowing in self-deception. Ward Price announced that the British raids had now killed 1,700 Berliners; Goebbels told his overseas services to make plain that the real death roll in Berlin so far was seventy-seven.⁷⁵ Göring's bombers had killed seven thousand Londoners during September alone. But as Goebbels privately realized, the British were tough: 'They're still holding out.'⁷⁶ Touring public shelters in Berlin on the first night of November he found signs that nerves were getting more frayed.⁷⁷ Once again he could only hope that Hitler knew what he was up to.

Hitler did know, but again he had not initiated Dr Goebbels. He had decided as early as July 1940 to attack Russia. Even in December Goebbels still regarded Britain as 'our last remaining enemy.'⁷⁸ After their Black Forest conference on July 2, when Hitler had evidently voiced to him his annoyance that Stalin had annexed parts of Romania, Goebbels mused in his diary: 'The Slavs are spreading out right across the Balkans. . . . Perhaps we shall have to go to war again later, against the Soviets.'⁷⁹ At the end of that month he had warned the gauleiters to squelch any such rumors.⁸⁰ He and Hitler were both intrigued by the newsreel images of the Soviet-Finnish winter war just ended: The Red Army seemed temptingly primitive.⁸¹ Bolshevism is World Enemy No. 1, Goebbels told Hitler. 'We are bound to collide sooner or later.'⁸² Hitler agreed, but still he lied to Goebbels, saying that he was transferring army divisions to the east only on a better-safe-than-sorry basis.⁸³ 'He says quite spontaneously,' recorded Goebbels after Hitler had revealed his contempt for Moscow, 'that he trusts blindly and implicitly in our future.' The time was coming, Goebbels gathered, when old scores with Moscow were to be settled.⁸⁴

13 To forestall Stalin Hitler packed German troops into Romania and Finland in September. 'The Führer is determined,' observed Goebbels, 'not to relinquish any more of Europe to Russia.'⁸⁵ During October 1940 his diary revealed no hint of the intensive military preparations already afoot. Learning, to his surprise, that Hitler had invited the Soviet foreign minister Vyacheslav M. Molotov to Berlin, Goebbels saw it only in terms of a slap in the face to Britain.⁸⁶ He did not approve of Molotov. He instructed Berlin's S.A. not to provide guards of honor, and he did nothing to mobilize the cheering crowds that Ribbentrop had requested.⁸⁷ Hitler invited him to lunch with their Soviet guests on November 13. The Russian foreign minister seemed clever, even artful; his skin was of a waxy, yellow pallor. He listened politely to Goebbels through an interpreter for two hours, but scarcely even grunted in reply. After lunch Goebbels let fly to his private staff his scorn of Molotov, with his 'school

'The Soviets,' he snapped, in a dismissive generalization that was to prove fateful for Germany, 'are like their suits. They are cheap, and off-the-peg.'⁸⁸

1946

40: A Few Choice Drops of Poison

HE no longer spoke to Ribbentrop. A state of armed truce existed between them. The two ministers insulted each other by proxy and wounded by petty, bureaucratic devices when they could.¹ 'Everybody has their own daydream for when this war is over,' Goebbels would write. 'Mine is: To loaf around and sleep and make music and read fine books; to lie in the sun; not to pick up a newspaper; and to hear nothing whatever about the foreign ministry.'² Ribbentrop fired off a ten-page missive at him in February 1940, but Goebbels disdained even to reply, marveling that his old enemy had time for such things, and calling him a megalomaniac.³ ('A sick man,' he assessed later, 'childishly stuck-up and pompous, with little behind the façade.') Ribbentrop then wrote a twelve-page letter demanding that Goebbels turn over all foreign-language broadcasting to his ministry.⁵ After Holland surrendered he tried to snatch the powerful Hilversum transmitter from under Goebbels' nose.⁶ When Goebbels sent out one of his best propagandists, Werner Wächter—destroyer of the Berlin synagogues—to organize in Paris, open warfare with Ribbentrop was the result.⁷ As a direct snub to him, Goebbels set up a Reichspropaganda-Amt 'Ausland' (Abroad) to match those attached to each gau, under Felix Schmidt-Decker.⁸ Learning that the *Börsenzeitung* had feted Ribbentrop as a second Bismarck, Goebbels ordered Fritzsche to ensure ('in Ribbentrop's own interest') that it did not happen again.⁹

In November 1940 there was a ludicrous show-down, and almost a shoot-out, between the two ministries. Pursuant to Hitler's decree of September 8, 1939 Ribbentrop had emplaced liaison units in various propaganda agencies like the Berlin shortwave radio station at No. 77 Kaiserdamm. Goebbels refused to tolerate these 'spies' and ordered them out early in December 1940.¹⁰ Ribbentrop sent them back in, backed by his own fifteen-man S.S. bodyguard, with orders to use force if necessary, and he then sent Goebbels a telegram from his château at Fuschl telling him what he had done. In a paroxysm of rage Goebbels appealed to Himmler.¹¹ Over the next week he whipped up the entire Reich chancellery into a froth of indignation and Timmler's unit was again evicted, this time for good.¹² Ribbentrop retired to lick his wounds and cast about for revenge.

HITLER had lost the strategic initiative that November of 1940. Göring

Scenes?
Himmler
with key
actor here.

1940

had given up hope of defeating Britain in the air and taken six weeks' leave. With Milch in command the Luftwaffe bombers battered away at London, Coventry, and Birmingham. 'When will that *Kreatur* Churchill finally capitulate?' wondered Goebbels. 'Britain can't take this for ever!'¹³ Reading up on that country's national character, however, he came across the ominous words phlegm and bovine dullness (*Stumpfsinn*). 'In their shoes,' he cursed, 'any other nation would have collapsed long ago.'¹⁴ In Hitler's private cinema they watched newsreels of London in flames. 'The British empire is self-destructing,' Hitler said. He now suggested that Britain was banking on Moscow.¹⁵ The war would continue all winter, he added. He would abstain from bombing over Christmas, in the hope of wrongfooting Churchill who would surely display no such restraint.¹⁶ 'After which,' wrote Goebbels, 'the British shall see reprisal raids until the tears run down their cheeks.'¹⁷

Italy's entry into the war—in mid-June, after France's defeat was assured—presented Goebbels with special problems.¹⁸ She had done so little even then that Goebbels had had to inspire rumors that this was at the Führer's specific request.¹⁹ In Greece, Albania, and Africa the Italians let down the Axis badly. Fearing ugly demonstrations from the ordinary Berliners, he had to discourage the Italians from participating in the next street collections for the Red Cross.²⁰ 'These are fine allies we've got into bed with,' he wrote.²¹ As Italy's rapid retreats degenerated into routs, he advised German radio to stop broadcasting Italian 'quick marches.'

Standing beside Hitler in the Borsig munitions works on December 10 he was relieved to hear him say, to loud cheers, that he was not going in for costly prestige victories—a veiled reference to his resolve not to risk an expedition across the English Channel.²² Hitler repeated this in a secret speech to all his gauleiters, including Goebbels, the next day. Putting a brave face on things he called the war as good as won. 'Not that he had wanted this war at all'—so Goebbels summarized his remarks—'and he would still agree to peace on an acceptable basis. Invasion not planned for the time being. Air supremacy necessary first. Hydrophobia. And he is not one for taking risks if things are possible without them. He wants to avoid heavy casualties.' Goebbels also heard Hitler refer briefly on this occasion to the Soviet Union—she was lurking in the wings, but he was undaunted. He was sending more troops to Romania, his only source of oil. 'We're not letting anybody in there,' he promised.²³

One week later Hitler signed the Barbarossa decree, instructing his generals to prepare a short sharp war against the Soviet Union. He dropped not a hint of this to Goebbels for four more months. Lunching at the chancellery the minister was puzzled to hear Hitler say that he 'hoped' the war would be over in 1941; Hitler again revealed the irrational dread that restrained him from a cross-Channel invasion. 'He's frightened of the water,' Goebbels realized again. 'He says he would undertake it only if he was in the direst straits.'²⁴

on December 30, 1940 Goebbels pre-recorded his New Year's Eve broadcast, to avoid having to leave the comfort (and safety) of Lanke on the night.²⁵ His original script had read:

People would probably have called me a fool or a dreamer, or anything but a politician worthy of serious consideration, if I had prophesied on New Year's Eve 1939, when I spoke from this very spot to the German people, that at the end of the New Year then just dawning, 1940, the German front line would extend from Kirkenes to the Bay of Biscay . . . that Norway would have been taken under our wing as far as the Arctic Circle, that France would have suffered a total military defeat, and that Britain would be so stricken by the German counter-blockade and by our Luftwaffe's day-and-night reprisal raids on her vitals that, reeling under the hammer blows of the German armed forces, she would be struggling for naked survival and pleading with the rest of the world to help her out—even if only for a few more weeks.

Hitler, censoring his script, scratched out the last word of this lengthy sentence and wrote *months*; he also pedantically corrected Goebbels' errors of grammar and style. When, moreover, Goebbels had written that only one thought inspired them, of victory—'For that we shall work and we shall fight, until our last enemy lies shattered on the ground'—Hitler changed it to read 'until the onslaught of our last enemy has been repulsed.' Goebbels' boast, 'Never shall we capitulate—never,' was scratched out altogether.²⁶

THE new year opened on a low key. Goebbels found himself further than ever from his old intimate relationship with Hitler. Italy lost both Bardia and Tobruk. His diary makes no mention of Rommel's expedition to Libya until the end of January 1941 or of Rommel himself until three weeks after that; so Hitler had not told him of that diversion either.²⁷

A new trade pact was signed with Moscow; unaware of the sinister strategic purpose with which Hitler had vested it, Goebbels saw it only as another slap in the face for Churchill.²⁸ His admiration for the British prime minister remained undiminished, particularly after another belligerent speech by him to parliament in December 1940. He wrote a flaming attack on Churchill for *Das Reich* but ordered the rest of the press to lay off him for fear of creating a dangerous legend around the man.²⁹ 'Our press is publishing things which absolutely speak for the old swine, for instance scurrilous things about his lifestyle which are not at all ludicrous or even contemptible. He has some attractive features,' admitted Goebbels privately, 'which we don't want to underscore in the press. You've either got to hate your enemy or expose him to ridicule.'³⁰

When Hitler returned to Berlin on January 28, 1941 he did not at once

send for Goebbels. Goebbels told his diary that *he* had prior engagements.³¹ The erosion of his influence is plain from a bleak entry ten days later, after Otto Dietrich had once again put his nose out of joint. 'I may now have to appeal to the Führer,' he wrote, 'awkward though that may prove for me right now.'³² And then there was the war department (O.K.H.): they had borrowed Goebbels' best film technicians to make their movie *Victory in the West*; now they refused to let him have them back—another indicator of his momentary impotence.³³ For the first time in years he stayed away from the party's foundation ceremony in Munich on February 24; he listened to Hitler's speech on the radio, a peculiar sensation, he admitted, without being more explicit about their estrangement.³⁴

Feb
24

ASSUREDLY it is Magda who is causing his problems with Hitler. Goebbels treats her more scandalously than ever. Her father, his life slowly ebbing in Duisburg, sends to Magda and her mother Auguste Behrend a Christmas telegram which studiously omits all mention of Dr Joseph Goebbels. When she visits the city hospital, her dying father has to send her three hundred marks to defray her travel expenses.³⁵ On April 3, 1941, Magda returns to Duisburg to share her father's last hours on earth. Her sorrow leaves Goebbels stone cold. 'I scarcely know him,' he callously observes in his diary, not caring who may read it later, 'and I shall not be losing anything when he goes.'³⁶

What else has caused the friction? A terse line in his diary for December 20, 1940 refers to a 'short parlay' with Magda—his euphemism for a blazing row—between two air-raid alerts.³⁷ The likely cause is as much the reappearance of Karl Hanke, now a bemedalled war hero of thirty-eight, as the arrival at Schwanenwerder early in November of the vivacious young Ursula Quandt, who has just divorced Magda's boring and half-blind stepson Herbert Quandt. Ursula, nearly a generation younger than Magda, 'now looks quite delicious,' as Goebbels candidly observes.³⁸ His diary mentions her no fewer than thirty-nine times in the next six months. Over Christmas 1940 Magda finds that he has invited Ursula out to Lanke too, with his young adjutant Herbert Heiduschke, a paratrooper, for the sake of appearances.³⁹ At the New Year he pulls the same stunt. The threesome are inseparable for the rest of January, even traveling together to Vienna.⁴⁰

Dec

Even in the handwritten diaries the clues about his relationships with women are so urbane as to be almost invisible. He records the curious fact that their nanny has 'quite unexpectedly' given birth to a child. 'Nobody,' he informs his diary, 'had the slightest idea. I arrange for the scared creature to be taken care of. She has suffered fear and pain enough.'⁴¹ 'I discussed with Mrs — her future work,' he writes a few weeks later. 'She's expecting a child now.'⁴² For a married woman this would not normally excite comment. Seven weeks later, just before Barbarossa, he records this episode: 'A baby in a flower-covered perambulator is put into the ministry's entrance hall for me. With an anony-

mous letter asking me to show an interest in the baby. I shall concern myself with it. I shall first try to find the mother.^{43*}

If Magda has indeed sought comfort with Hanke, it does not last long.⁴⁴ Goebbels prevails on Hitler to banish him from Berlin. The Führer splits Silesia's administration in two: Hanke becomes gauleiter and Oberpräsident of his native Lower Silesia.⁴⁵ Arriving for supper with Hitler on the day after this arrangement is announced, Goebbels finds Hanke there as well. 'I cut him dead,' he records—four words that say it all.⁴⁶

Even now strange events cast a shadow over his family, which the diary cannot entirely conceal. Magda leaves for a five-week cure in Dresden.⁴⁷ All six children leave at the same time. Life in Berlin's air-raid shelters and the indifferent diet are blighting their growth, writes Goebbels, and Göring has offered them sanctuary in his villa on the Obersalzberg.⁴⁸ Midst much weeping Goebbels sees his entire family, with baby Heide in her little basket, leave at ten A.M. on February 12, 1941. True, nearly one thousand trainloads of other children have been evacuated from Berlin, but as Churchill's raids have momentarily declined other parents are clamoring for their return; besides, Lanke, so expensively built, is hardly at greater risk than the Obersalzberg, and the comely young divorcée Ursula Quandt has no qualms about staying out there at Goebbels' forest estate.⁴⁹

He is no stranger to what he calls the sexual problems of men and women forced to live apart.⁵⁰ He feigns dismay at being 'all alone' in the big house at No. 20 Hermann-Göring Strasse, but all that empty it is not. 'Chatted Ursula up a teeny bit,' he records, 'then off to bed exhausted.'⁵¹

From her sanitarium Magda writes him a long letter about her visit to Hitler when she left the children at the Göring villa.⁵² Goebbels tells his staff that Hitler, followed by an inquisitive Bormann, has led her aside, asked, 'Has the Doctor come to his senses?', and then silently squeezed her hand.⁵³ Goebbels motors out to Lanke for a week to read, to ride through the forest in his splendid new carriage with the 'nice, naïve,' and 'unproblematic' Ursula, and to listen to classical music.⁵⁴ At the end of that week another letter comes from Magda, who has had another mild heart attack. 'Now,' he triumphs, 'she is nice and affectionate to me.'⁵⁵

She pleads for him to visit, and he does spend one evening in Dresden (with Ursula) listening to her wifely prattle—'It is all very nice and harmonious,' he records, another of those give-away phrases like the 'Ursula looks gorgeous' that he writes after a stroll around the gardens at No. 20.⁵⁶ When Ursula is away for two weeks visiting the children Goebbels entertains the occasional actress like Margit Symms, a Hungarian beauty; 'helped her career a bit,' he notes afterward.⁵⁷

Magda returns to Berlin on March 22. She has arranged for their

* The diary does not mention any of these episodes again. Visiting Buenos Aires in October 1991 the author was informed that an illegitimate son of Goebbels was living there.

As a gambler he knows that even if Magda will not pick up the relationship, it will result in a good job for 12 children.

scene!

h
2

children to be billeted at Bischofswiesen in Salzburg's countryside.⁵⁸ At the end of the month both she and Ursula have competition with the arrival of Marina Shalyapin, a good-looking Russian émigrée with fascinating tales of the 1917 bolshevik revolution to tell. The little Doctor spends three weeks flirting with her, especially when Magda goes down to Dessau to say good-bye to Harald, who is off to the Balkan wars.⁵⁹ All three women come to Lanke for Easter—'A turbulent Easter,' records Goebbels.⁶⁰ On the last day of April Magda leaves, taking Ursula with her, to transfer the six children to a large summer house on a lake near Bad Aussee, on the Upper Danube. 'They are to stay there,' explained Goebbels, 'until the war is over.'⁶¹

HE forbade all prophecies about when that might be. 'As for Messrs Sperrle and Stumpff,' he said, expressing his fury at two of the Luftwaffe's most indolent commanders, 'they are in for a surprise. The war game isn't child's play after all.'⁶²

The present lull in the war, he had privately explained on January 9 to the foreign journalists, opening their new press club on Leipziger Platz, was just a 'creative pause.'⁶³ In fact the 1941 hunting season for Hitler's bombers and submarines had not yet begun.⁶⁴ By February 6 he knew of Hitler's plans to evict the British expeditionary force currently disembarking in Greece.⁶⁵ 'It is high time,' he wrote in *Das Reich*, 'for London to begin listening to harsh facts.'⁶⁶ He again began to hint at a coming invasion of England.⁶⁷ 'Hitherto,' he teased foreign journalists on March 7, 'we have never set dates. . . . Now for the first time in his political career the Führer has mentioned one, namely: "The decision will come this year."'⁶⁸ In the privacy of his diary however he admitted it was fraud. 'For England's benefit we're putting on a bit of an act on the subject of invasion,' he explained, 'to get them all worked up and permanently in a state of fright.'⁶⁹

WHEN Hitler returned to Berlin on March 15, 1941 something still kept the two men apart. 'I am far too rushed to see him,' was Dr Goebbels' lame excuse to his diary.⁷⁰ He saw him at a distance the next day, speaking at the Memorial Day ceremony. Goebbels was impressed by the confidence he voiced in victory, but it perplexed him that Hitler was still careful not to state that the war would end in 1941.⁷¹

He was of course still unaware of Barbarossa; he still believed, after an exchange of views with General Eugen von Schobert, that the general's Eleventh Army, stationed on the eastern frontier, was covering Germany's rear.⁷²

Hitler finally invited him round to the chancellery on the seventeenth. 'We are slowly strangling Britain,' he told Goebbels, describing their now resumed submarine and air attacks. 'One day she'll lie croaking on the ground.'⁷³ Not above a bit of crude influence-buying, Goebbels on his next visit to Hitler offered him twenty million marks for his social and

Feb

March 11

cultural funds, from the Winter Relief and film industry purses which he controlled.⁷⁴

At some stage now Hitler did finally brief him on Barbarossa. Perhaps it was on March 20, because the next morning Goebbels requested that all Russian journalists be kept under close surveillance.⁷⁵ Moreover, hearing of the friendly reception accorded by Moscow to Japan's foreign minister Yosuke Matsuoka on his way to Berlin the minister commented, 'I don't trust the bolsheviks.'⁷⁶ After attending Hitler's banquet for the Japanese minister on March 28 Goebbels handwrote this explicit diary entry:

[After Yugoslavia] the biggest operation will then follow: Against R. It is being meticulously concealed, only a very few are in the know. It will be initiated with massive west-bound troop movements. We divert attention every which way, except to the east. A feint invasion operation is to be prepared against England, then like lightning everything goes back [east] and up and at 'em. The Ukraine is one vast granary.

Psychologically, he admitted, there were obvious drawbacks—for example the fate of Napoleon's Grand Army. Propaganda would get around that by playing the anti-bolshevik melody. What a challenge! 'We're going to pull off our masterpiece,' he bragged in the diary. 'Great victories lie in store. It all calls for steady nerves and a clear head. . . . It's great to be in on it,' he added, a hint that it still irked him that Hitler had kept him out of the inner circle for so many months.⁷⁷

ON the day that Berlin welcomed Matsuoka, the Yugoslav government which had just joined the Axis was overthrown in a coup funded by the British secret service.⁷⁸ To Goebbels, seeing him at the banquet in Matsuoka's honor, Hitler had seemed under a lot of strain. The Führer told him afterwards that he had decided to deal with Yugoslavia at once. For several days anti-German demonstrations rocked Belgrade. Goebbels allowed his newspapers to publish reports on them without any comment other than, as he put it, a few choice drops of poison. On April 4, his black transmitters went into action, broadcasting in all the regional dialects, promising everybody autonomy if Yugoslavia were destroyed.⁷⁹ He was already choosing the Balkan victory fanfare.⁸⁰

Looking at the clock over dinner on April 5 he revealed to his closest staff that Germany's bomber squadrons were already being fueled for the attack on Belgrade.⁸¹ At one A.M. Hitler sent for him; he wanted company. Three hundred bombers, he said, would smash Belgrade at daybreak, followed by three hundred more the next night. 'We're going to smoke out this nest of Serbian plotters,' noted Goebbels, aping Hitler's language. The Führer said he would prosecute this war without pity. They sat sipping tea until precisely five-twenty, the hour appointed for the attack, then Hitler retired to bed.⁸² 'The Führer himself,' Goebbels told his senior staff at eleven o'clock that morning, 'estimates the duration of this whole operation at two months, I myself think it may well be shorter.' As

Scene
Was he
not trusted
His foot is
ready to
seize in
its power.
Five little
months down
there between
the toes.
He sacrifices
his love &
daughters to
bring relief
from such
pain?

for Moscow's response, Goebbels reassured his staff. 'Russia will think twice before poking her fingers into this blaze,' he suggested. 'She'll stand aside clenching her fists with rage, and watch what happens next. You know the Führer's methods. Today and tonight a judgment is being inflicted on Belgrade on such a scale that for a thousand kilometers all round people will say, "Stand back! Don't get involved!" And that's the object of the exercise.'⁸³

Seventeen thousand were killed in the air raids on Belgrade.⁸⁴ There was worldwide outrage; when Churchill bombed Berlin on April 10, damaging the university, state library, and state opera house, Goebbels was perversely pleased as he could use this raid to offset the bombing of Belgrade. The British claimed to have killed three thousand Berliners; he kept quiet—the real total was fifteen.⁸⁵

Later that month Churchill started dropping huge four-thousand pound bombs on Berlin—'blockbusters,' they were called. 'That makes the future look pretty bleak,' Goebbels admitted.⁸⁶ He remarked to Hitler that if anything the air raids were making their own public even more refractory.⁸⁷ Neither paused to consider that the Luftwaffe's raids might be having the same effect on the English public. After violent raids on Kiel, since Göring's officials failed, Goebbels took charge of relief measures himself, ordering the evacuation of women and children and the construction of shelters, and rushing furniture and clothing to the blitzed naval base.⁸⁸ At Emden he did the same. These were in fact his first overt steps in the drive to become Germany's next dictator.

FOR Hitler's concurrent campaign in Greece Goebbels planned a two-tier propaganda policy. For domestic consumption, the British expeditionary force in Greece was to be described as powerful; but abroad it was to be mocked as puny and ineffective.⁸⁹ Moreover, since it was in Germany's strategic interest to detain and destroy the British there, Goebbels publicly accused Churchill of planning to do a bunk.⁹⁰ 'We have to pillory Churchill as a typical gambler,' he said on April 15, explaining his tactics to his morning conference, 'more at home in the gambling salons of Monte Carlo . . . cynical, ruthless, and brutal, spilling the blood of others so as to spare the blood of the British.' If the B.B.C. now announced that Churchill was pouring reinforcements into Greece, he said, their response must be: 'Lies, all lies! It's not true, it's just a cowardly fraud perpetrated by Mr Churchill. Our own precise observations clearly prove that the British are taking to their heels.' And if London's Reuters agency now referred to the British as 'taking up new positions,' then German propaganda must taunt: 'These new positions consist of the troop transports in which the British are planning their getaway.'⁹¹ Soon the world's press was resounding with the insults which he had dictated at conferences like these.

His orthodox propaganda capabilities within Greece were strictly limited. There were only 37,000 radio sets in the entire country.⁹² Besides, the Greeks were never Hitler's enemy. Had the British not sent in their

troops, he twice told his propaganda minister, he would have happily left his Italian allies to stew in their own juice.⁹³ Now, as the Germans drove the British forces once more back toward the coast, Churchill lapsed into a brooding silence. Goebbels heard that he was seeking solace in whisky and cigars. 'Just the kind of opponent we need,' he observed.⁹⁴ By the last day of April the British had all left, aboard troop transports bound for Crete and elsewhere.

'First,' wrote Goebbels, 'a short breather, and then the grand slam.'⁹⁵

Until now he had kept his knowledge of Barbarossa strictly to himself. On April 10, 1941 he secretly directed Dr Taubert to resuscitate his anti-Comintern staff.⁹⁶ Taubert's eastern department eventually became a huge body with eight hundred employees running the radio, press, film, and cultural life of the occupied territories except the Government-General (as occupied Poland was now called), with a vaguely anti-Moscow-centralism, antisemitic line.⁹⁷

That rainy Easter weekend, Goebbels took a few colleagues out to Lanke. 'How do you think,' he suddenly asked, strolling along the boardwalk around the little Bogensee, 'the German people are going to react to a war with Moscow?' Without waiting for the answer he continued: It would be their ministry's most gargantuan propaganda feat ever. For fifteen years they had demonized the Russians. Then Hitler had signed his pact with Stalin. 'If we do another about-face,' he pointed out, 'nobody is ever going to believe us again.'⁹⁸

Goebbels heard a few days later that Stalin, standing on the Moscow railroad platform for Matsuoka's onward journey to Japan, had hugged the German military attaché Krebs and loudly promised eternal friendship. 'Splendid,' commented the minister. 'Stalin evidently doesn't want to make the acquaintance of our panzer divisions either.'⁹⁹ Before leaving Moscow, Matsuoka signed a Japanese-Soviet non-aggression treaty. 'That doesn't suit the Führer one bit,' Goebbels observed. 'Not given the ongoing planning.'¹⁰⁰

? ON the evening of April 18 the High Command's liaison officer Major Hans-Leo Martin gate-crashed the little birthday party that Goebbels was staging for his mother in Hermann-Göring Strasse, took him aside, and said: 'Herr Reichsminister, I have been instructed to inform you that our Wehrmacht is shortly to attack Russia.'¹⁰¹ Goebbels' face revealed not a flicker of emotion.

He had neither compunctions nor fears about the operation. He shortly quoted in his diary this facile assessment as stated by Hitler: 'The entire fabric of bolshevism will collapse like a house of cards.'¹⁰² Summing up the Balkan campaign in the Reichstag a few days later, Hitler spoke for the first time of the possibility that the war would continue into 1942. The public was dismayed. Goebbels however was already discussing the new fanfare for Russia with his radio bosses.¹⁰³

Returning from the dockyards at Gotenhafen (formerly Gdynia) and Danzig where he had inspected the mighty new battleships Bismarck and

1941

Tirpitz, Hitler again remarked moodily to Goebbels on the damage that Churchill was doing to the British empire, and on Italy's unbroken series of defeats. 'Without them,' he said, 'Pétain would have stayed at our side, Franco might have joined us after all, and Gibraltar would be in our hands. Then Turkey would have been wide open to offers too. It just doesn't bear thinking about.' For a while he day-dreamed on: Suez dropping like a ripe fruit into his hands, England surrendering. No more. 'We have all that to thank our gentleman-allies for.' On balance however he still felt that Britain had lost the war in May 1940, at the time of Dunkirk.¹⁰⁴

The moon would soon be full. Goebbels drove out to Lanke for the weekend. The Luftwaffe was out in strength that Saturday May 10, delivering one last thundering night attack on London before regrouping to the east. The Houses of Parliament were seriously damaged. Goebbels took note of all the war news that Sunday evening. 'The day was quiet,' he wrote the next morning, 'without any major sensation.'¹⁰⁵ He settled down to vet the latest newsreel.

It featured a visit by Hitler's beetle-browed deputy, Rudolf Hess, to the Messerschmitt aircraft factory in Augsburg.

174

41: The Malodorous Thing

y12 **T**HE sensation had already happened. On Monday May 12, 1941 the phone rang at Lanke. It was somebody at the Berghof—though not Hitler himself, he was still too shocked to speak—reporting that the deputy Führer, Rudolf Hess, had taken off for Scotland in a Messerschmitt late on Saturday and was now missing, perhaps dead. Hitler was therefore issuing a communiqué speaking of Hess's 'dementia.' 'What a sight for the world,' exclaimed Goebbels in his diary. 'A mentally-defective deputy to the Führer.' He blamed Otto Dietrich for this infelicitous choice of argument. He was furious that Hitler had not asked his advice.² The blow to the party's prestige could be fatal. He immediately ordered the Hess item removed from the weekly newsreel.³

He hoped that Hess was dead, but he was not. On Tuesday the British revealed that the Nazi leader had landed by parachute. Goebbels told his secret morning conference to keep a stiff upper lip.³ 'He had been summoned to Hitler that afternoon with all the other gauleiters, he said.'⁴ 'We'll get to the bottom of the affair this afternoon and I shall dictate more detailed instructions from the Obersalzberg after that,' he added. Meanwhile they were to concentrate on the air war—on anything but Hess.⁵

At the Berghof Hitler showed him two letters that Hess had left behind, mapping out a 'peace program' drafted in October.⁶ He was going to England to make her plight plain to her, to get the Duke of Hamilton to overthrow the Churchill regime and to bring about peace without any loss of face for Britain. The two letters oozed half-baked occultist theories. 'That's the kind of men we have ruling Germany,' wrote Goebbels perhaps incautiously. 'The whole business is explicable only in the light of his nature-healing and herb-munching foibles.' Perhaps Hitler's communiqué calling Hess 'demented' was not so far off base after all.⁷

Goebbels quailed at the prospect of what the enemy would make of this. He repeatedly said later that he wished he had been in the enemy's shoes. Then he would have published whatever he liked in Hess's name.⁸ He described Duff Cooper & Co. as dimwitted dilettantes.⁹

y13 When Hitler spoke to all the gauleiters that afternoon, May 13, he was visibly shaken.¹⁰ After driving Goebbels back to the local airfield S.A.-chief of staff Viktor Lutze noted that the announcement about Hess would lead to a leadership crisis, because the public must ask how such sick men could be retained at the highest level; how could he even

1941

THE MALODOROUS THING 361

have been named 'second man' after Hitler, given that he had been hobnobbing with occultists, astrologers, and hypnotists.¹¹ In an impotent frenzy Goebbels banned all such charlatans.¹² If explaining Barbarossa was going to be tricky for Goebbels, explaining the Hess affair seemed impossible.

He found his department heads waiting for him on the tarmac at Tempelhof.¹³ 'Any doctor will tell you,' he said, taking them aside, 'that there are crazy people who seem all along to be perfectly normal and lucid.' Hess had deluded himself that he could single-handedly make peace. Goebbels had however persuaded Hitler, he continued, that they should not breathe one more word about it, and he offered to his dubious colleagues this analogy: A society hostess gives a dinner party; just as they all enter the dining room, her darling whippet dumps a sizable doo-dah on the priceless Persian carpet. What now? Taking her escort's arm, she strides over to the table acting as though the Malodorous Thing does not exist. 'The Malodorous Thing in our case,' he concluded, 'is the befuddled Mr Hess. He no longer exists.'¹⁴

He repeated this in more clinical language the next morning.¹⁵ 'Remember the Röhm affair,' he said. 'We shot our mouths off on that occasion with the result that the public talked of little else for years.' 'In any case,' he added mysteriously, 'something is about to happen in the military sphere, and this will distract attention from Hess.'¹⁶

AFTER the Hess incident Goebbels spends two days at Bad Aussee. His children are staying nearby with Magda, Ursula Quandt, and his mother. He gives all three ladies presents for Mother's Day.¹⁷

Back at Lanke, Ello Quandt visits him. She is our source for an episode which, in bald outline, has Magda suffering a nervous breakdown after witnessing a female secretary clambering from the gardens into her husband's study one night. She hysterically tells Ello that she's going to sue for divorce.¹⁸ The only secretary to whom the diary lays clues is the sweetly named Helga Hoenig, and the date is May 27, 1941. Magda is already in a state of nerves because Göring's costly airborne assault on Crete has just begun, casualties among the paratroops are heavy, and she is worried about Harald.¹⁹ Goebbels meticulously informs his diary that he has been sitting up late working on a new book.²⁰ 'Fräulein Hoenig helps me with this very assiduously.'²¹ It is fair to observe that his female staff very rarely rate such a mention in his dispatches; and to speculate that he, the master of all alibis, is creating yet another.

Ello phones Goebbels to advise him to head off Magda. The diary shows that he indeed drives over to Schwanenwerder. 'Magda's heart is playing up. She's got into a state again, what with the worry about Harald.'²² They have a 'little chat.' He hopes that she will soon get better. He drives back to Lanke alone. Neither has touched upon the window-climbing secretary. 'The crafty fox ran rings round me again,' Magda tells Ello as her husband drives away. Ello asks why she puts up with it all.

May 27, 1941

Ello found
and
center.

scum

for ever was
intense.

* One of our minor details had been, but this

'Look at me, Ello,' is the reply. 'I'm growing old. These girls are twenty years younger—and they haven't had seven children.'²³

ON distant battlefields the gods of war still thundered. From Rommel's HQ in North Africa Alfred-Ingemar Berndt, his new aide, sent Goebbels dramatic reports about Tobruk.²⁴ In Munich the sinister Martin Bormann took over Hess's vacant role as head of the Party chancellery. Goebbels neither liked nor trusted him, and for years he would deal with him only at arm's length through Walter Tiessler. When Bormann began a vicious campaign against the churches, it was Goebbels who told him—through Tiessler—to lay off.²⁵

In Crete the desperate fighting came to an end. Herbert Heiduschke was already dead and buried at Khania; the death of his young adjutant affected Goebbels deeply, if his diary is to be believed.²⁶ Churchill alleged that Hitler's paratroops had worn New Zealand uniforms. Why not say they were dressed as postmen, Goebbels scoffed to his department heads? 'They've already had us in priests', nuns', and Dutchmen's uniforms.'²⁷ Göring himself telephoned that Harald was alive; Goebbels promised his stepson later that he would always see him provided for. 'He always treated me like his own son,' Harald said later.²⁸

Endless troop transports had begun heading east. Rumors were rife, most of them deliberately planted by Goebbels.²⁹ There was talk that Stalin and Hitler were about to meet: That Stalin was to lease the Ukraine to Germany for ninety-nine years: That a state visit to Berlin was imminent: That millions of red flags were already being stitched.³⁰ Goebbels lifted his wartime ban on dancing as a hint that the Nazi appetite was momentarily gorged. All Germany knew of immense troop movements heading west for the invasion of England—some people had actually seen the troop trains being loaded at Grunewald station. He briefed his head of broadcasting Dr Glasmeier to select new England fanfares, he activated English-speaking propaganda companies, and he held a top-secret conference of department heads on the last day of May to confide to them that Germany was about to invade England.³¹

About the real truth—Barbarossa—he briefed only a tiny handful including Hadamowsky and Major Titel. He must also have initiated the ministry's popular Professor Karl Bömer, head of his foreign press department. Bömer had an alcohol problem however and on May 22 Otto Dietrich phoned Goebbels with word that at a Bulgarian legation reception a week earlier the professor had blurted out these words: 'We'll thrash the Russians in four weeks. Rosenberg is to become governor-general of Russia. I am to become his under-Staatssekretär.'³² The Bulgarian envoy had cabled urgently to Sofia asking to be recalled for consultations. Tipped off by his press chief Dr Paul Schmidt and by the Forschungsamt codebreakers, Ribbentrop had greedily seized on this chance of scoring off Goebbels.³³ Hitler announced that he was going to have the head of 'whichever minister' had betrayed the Barbarossa secret to Bömer. He ordered a full-blooded Gestapo inquiry and the luckless

Bormann
"Goebbels is
still Catholic"

scene

g22

professor was thrown into jail.³⁴ 'That's what comes from boozing,' wrote Goebbels.³⁵

He had to save Bömer if only to save his own skin. Witnesses named by Bömer swore that he had been misquoted; somewhat implausibly, the professor claimed not to have known the secret anyway. His minister did what he could, while cautiously telling his diary that Bömer had only himself to blame.³⁶ 'Ribbentrop,' he also wrote, 'does not play fair. He confuses politics with selling champagne, where the only thing that matters is doing your opponent down.'³⁷ On Hitler's insistence Bömer was stood before the People's Court on October 18. In an unusual alliance, forged of a mutual enmity to Ribbentrop, both Dietrich and Goebbels testified on Bömer's behalf—the minister declaiming theatrically, 'If you find Bömer guilty, then you must find me guilty too!'³⁸ Convicted of carelessness rather than treason, Bömer was sentenced to two years in prison.³⁹ It was further proof how low Goebbels' stock had sunk at Hitler's HQ.

He could hardly wait for the new war to begin. On June 4 he shared the deadly secret with Leopold Gutterer, his Staatssekretär and trusty amanuensis ('upon whom,' he had written, 'I can impose at will').⁴⁰ Since the last week in May he had been feeding 'invasion' rumors to the British, but there was disappointingly little evidence that they were rising to the bait.⁴¹ He wondered if he was being perhaps too subtle, and decided on blunter tactics.⁴² With Hitler's approval he drafted for the Berlin *Völkischer Beobachter's* June 13 edition an article, 'E.g. Crete,' which implied that the airborne assault on that island had been the final dress-rehearsal for the invasion of Britain; he then arranged for the Gestapo to seize the entire edition as soon as the embassies and foreign press corps had received their copies. As soon as the wiretappers heard one American correspondent file his story on this sensation to New York, all phone lines out of Germany were cut.⁴³

It was one of his most devious stunts. To the uninitiated his 'gaffe' looked like the terminal blow to his prestige. News of it spread throughout the government grapevine. He hammed it up all day: He did not attend his morning press conference (instead, backstage, he was trying out new fanfares for Barbarossa). Dyed-in-the-wool Nazis like *Reichsfrauenführerin* Gertrud Scholtz-Klink thought it prudent to cancel long-standing appointments with him. 'That's human nature for you,' reflected Goebbels, and he chuckled at these faiblesses while outside his door Helga Hoenig and his other secretaries wept real tears over his apparent disgrace. Only the much maligned Robert Ley showed strength of character, telephoning him to ask if there was anything he could do—an act of true compassion of which Goebbels often spoke later on.^{44*}

Hitler returned to Berlin that day, Friday June 13, 1941. Keeping up

Goebbels
on
Ribbentrop
selling his
champagne
at the expense
of the other

June 1

scenes

June

* The effectiveness of this costly stunt was arguable. The *New York Times* and others reported the suppression of the VB edition carrying his article, but the truth about Barbarossa had long been known to Churchill at least, from code-breaking.

pretenses, Goebbels did not walk over to the chancellery for his usual lunch either that day or the next. On Sunday however he was driven in pouring rain to the back entrance in a borrowed car and hidden behind a copy of the *Börsenzeitung*. Schaub saw him and Hitler laughing uproariously over the fake *VB* edition.⁴⁵

June
22

Hitler told him that Barbarossa would begin on Sunday June 22 with the mightiest artillery bombardment in history. 'The example of Napoleon will not be repeated.' Fortunately Stalin was massing his armies on the frontiers, so Hitler estimated that it would all be over in four months. Goebbels, who set little store by the Russians' fighting strength, estimated even less. 'If ever an operation was a walkover then this is.' As for the pre-attack period, there would this time be no protracted crescendo in the press, but total silence until the day of the sudden onslaught itself.

Goebbels was pleased that Hitler was going ahead with Barbarossa. He had abhorred the period of uneasy collaboration with Stalin as a blot on the Nazi escutcheon. He even spoke kindly of Alfred Rosenberg, saying that the coming campaign justified all that he had stood for. 'Right or wrong,' he quoted Hitler as saying, 'we've got to win.... Once we've pulled it off, who's to question us about how we did it?' Goebbels added, 'We've got so much to answer for that we've just got to win.'

He had begun drafting the leaflets, brochures, and posters ('Adolf Hitler the liberator') for this new crusade weeks before. In top secrecy Taubert's staff had recorded discs, films, and radio broadcasts in the Ukrainian, Belorussian, Lithuanian, Latvian, and Estonian tongues as well as in Russian, and in the dialects of countless Caucasian and other tribes.⁴⁶ He (wrongly) assumed that Hitler was planning to exploit these peoples' latent hatred of Moscow as he advanced. 'Probably,' wrote Goebbels, 'our soldiers will never have been welcomed with such enthusiasm.'⁴⁷ He learned of Hitler's actual policies on Russia only gradually, at second hand and, as it turned out, imperfectly. Rosenberg was to become minister for the occupied eastern territories with his chief of staff Arno Schickedanz in the Ukraine. Goebbels was uneasy about these two men—they were too doctrinaire.⁴⁸ But Rosenberg told Taubert that he planned to dismantle the Soviet Union and restore each constituent republic's liberty, which seemed sound enough.⁴⁹

Goebbels' dummy Task Force England was unobtrusively disbanded. The East Prussian Joachim Paltzo, with Dr Friedrich Mahlo and Adolf Mauer, both of the ministry's tourist office, would direct the real Task Force Russia.⁵⁰ Thirty propaganda companies would fan out behind the armies, making propaganda for the first time among the liberated peoples—one *Propagandatrupp* for each city—and they would bring reports back to Germany. Goebbels' propaganda guidelines to the Soviet Union also bore little comparison with Hitler's later policies. Their enemies, he said, were Stalin and his Jewish backers; German propaganda was not, of course, to be anti-socialist, nor was there to be a reversion to tsarism; since the Red Army was fiercely nationalist there would also be no hint of dismemberment.⁵¹

June 22, 1941

He was therefore shocked by the scope of Hitler's plans for the Soviet empire when he saw them. Only the far eastern regions were to be left untouched.⁵² He decided that he would have to forget his past feuds with Rosenberg. 'If you handle him right,' he wrote after meeting him on June 14, 'you can get along with him.'⁵³

Behind closed doors and under a Gestapo guard, on Wednesday June 18 his ministry began printing three million copies of Hitler's proclamation to the eastern front.⁵⁴ To distract attention, Goebbels invited Italian diplomats out to Schwanenwerder for the weekend. On Saturday afternoon Hitler phoned to summon him to the chancellery, and he left his guests in his private cinema watching *Gone with the Wind*.

For three hours he and Hitler paced up and down the long chancellery drawing room, examining the dangers of attacking Russia, this malignant tumor in the east. The Führer felt that there must still be an influential peace faction in England—why had London otherwise systematically played down Hess's mission ever since he landed? For an hour he listened to the different Barbarossa fanfares, then approved of Goebbels' own choice—the pompous, brassy opening chords of Franz von Liszt's *Les Préludes* with a short added motif from the Horst Wessel anthem. They separated at two-thirty A.M. It was now Sunday June 22, 1941, the anniversary of Napoleon's ill-starred invasion of Russia. 'He has been working on this since July,' wrote Goebbels. 'And now the hour has struck.'

At three-thirty A.M. Hitler's armies and air force fell upon the Soviet Union. Unable to sleep, Goebbels paced his office, watching the minutes pass, listening to the sigh of history. Two hours later, he sat tautly before the microphone in the building's new studio, flanked by Gutterer and Hadamowsky, and heard the Barbarossa fanfare heralding Hitler's new campaign blaring from the loudspeakers. He broadcast the Führer's proclamation, then drove out to Schwanenwerder and his guests. The birds' dawn chorus was in full cry.⁵⁵

42: No Room for Two of Us

GOEBBELS' diaries, now all retrieved from hiding, chronicle Hitler's Russian campaign almost to the last day. Of particular interest is how this crusade, embarked upon in such a froth of misplaced optimism, impinged upon him as minister: How he argued for the adoption of more realistic policies toward the 'liberated' Russians, and how, when all seemed lost, Hitler finally granted to him the powers he craved to mobilize the entire nation. But he was a realist too. He prohibited the publication of maps of the entire Soviet Union, in case readers felt that this time their Führer had bitten off more than he could chew.

He justified Barbarossa effortlessly. Churchill came to his aid with a radio broadcast that same Sunday evening, June 22, 1941, pledging unlimited British aid to Moscow. Goebbels argued that they had been conspiring together all along.² In an article published four days later he argued that the Soviet Union had been banking on taking over a stricken and war-ravaged Europe. 'In one hand they clutched the treaty with us ... but in the other they sharpened the blade to plunge into our back.'³ Two weeks later *Das Reich* published his *pièce justificative*, 'The Veil Falls,' in which he described Barbarossa as a war (though not a 'crusade'—he had forbidden the usage of that overworked noun) by civilized people 'against spiritual putrefaction, against the decay of public morality, against the bloody terrorization of mind and body, against criminal policies whose perpetrators sit astride mounds of corpses casting about for whom to select as their next victim.'⁴

For six days Hitler ordered a news blackout. On the seventh he ordered twelve special communiqués broadcast.⁵ At hourly intervals from eleven A.M. the same trumpets sounded. Goebbels was livid about this amateurish day-long deluge of fanfares.⁶ It allowed the common man to glimpse the workings of high propaganda; precisely because it destroyed the illusion, he had forbidden newspapers to publish behind-the-scenes photographs at film studios and reprimanded a weekly magazine for portraying the hallowed phonograph disc from which the victory fanfares were played during the battle of France.⁷ 'I shall see to it,' he wrote, wrongly blamed for this stunt, 'that this never happens again.'⁸

For Goebbels, image was everything. War newsreels never showed air-raid victims, and he persuaded Hitler to suppress lingering shots of battle-casualties in a film on the heroism of the medical corps during the battle

1941

of Crete.⁹ He wanted the public to believe in an antiseptic, almost bloodless war.

He injected his propaganda into the Soviet Union initially by means of three black transmitters disguised as Trotskyite, separatist, and nationalist.¹⁰ Eventually, despite the lack of receivers in the Soviet Union, he would have twenty-two official transmitters as well, broadcasting thirty-four daily bulletins in eighteen different languages.¹¹ He had persuaded the communists Torgler, Kasper, and Albrecht, at a secret meeting in his ministry during May, to broadcast appeals to the enemy in authentic communist double-speak to overthrow the 'traitor' Stalin and set up workers' and soldiers' councils; Goebbels stopped them from calling for street demonstrations, in case nobody showed up.¹² Hoping to use Ernst Thälmann too, he sent him reports on conditions in the Soviet Union; still in a concentration camp, 'Teddy' Thälmann disdained to collaborate (and was eventually shot).¹³

scenes of leading the Communists

After a few days in shock, Stalin came back fighting with a famous radio broadcast on July 3, 1941, proclaiming a patriotic war.¹⁴ Hitler now authorized Goebbels to unleash his main anti-Soviet propaganda campaign.¹⁵ There was no lack of material. Hearing of atrocities in Lvov, where the retreating Red Army had murdered six hundred Ukrainians, Goebbels rushed twenty journalists there to get eye-witness accounts.¹⁶ There was no need for him to invent horror stories. Hitler's secret police had stormed the Soviet diplomatic buildings in Paris and Berlin, and found some decidedly undiplomatic equipment including sound-proof execution chambers, a poisons laboratory, and electric crematoria for disposing of human remains.¹⁷ 'If a criminal gang comes to power,' dictated Goebbels reading the reports on these gruesome finds submitted by Heydrich and Abwehr chief Vice-Admiral Wilhelm Canaris, 'then it will conduct its politics with criminal methods too.' 'There would have been no room for the two of us in Europe in the long run.'¹⁸

July

Goebbels called briefly at No. 20 Hermann-Göring Strasse to check progress on the air-raid shelter that Speer was excavating in its gardens. Architect Hugo Bartels said it consumed enough cement to build three hundred working-class homes.¹⁹ Seven feet thick, its roof and walls would withstand the heaviest British bombs so far.²⁰

Worried that one thoughtless bomb might destroy his diaries, Goebbels moved all twenty volumes to safety in the Reichsbank vaults.²¹ He finally abandoned writing the diaries in his barely decipherable script, and began dictating them instead each morning to Otte, his high-speed stenographer, from notes compiled during the previous day. Aged thirty-four, Otte performed this task until the end, sometimes having to sleep on a couch next door until the next torrent of dictation was ready to sweep over him.²² One single day's entry might run to 144 pages.²³ Relays of secretaries typed each page on fine bond paper in triplicate, triple-spaced and in an outsize typeface; until the primitive glass microfiches containing all 75,000 pages surfaced in Moscow in 1992, where this

At. 2

author was the first historian privileged to use them, only a fragment was believed to have survived.

59 OTTE's first transcript was dated July 9, 1941. His minister had just paid a flying visit to the 'Wolf's Lair,' Hitler's new HQ built in a swampy, mosquito-infested forest in East Prussia.

Hitler boasted that the Germans had already damaged or destroyed two-thirds of Stalin's forces and written off five-sixths of his tanks and planes. 'Our strategy is to take on our enemies one at a time,' Hitler explained. 'Preventive wars are still the best.' Stalin had probably been banking on seizing Romania that autumn. 'Bad weather would have stalled Hitler's counter-moves, and he would have lost his only significant petroleum supplies. Goebbels was impressed: 'The Führer rescued the Reich from its fate,' he dictated. Hitler said that after 'rubbing out' Moscow and Leningrad he would advance on the river Volga and the Ural mountains. A repetition of Napoleon's disaster was impossible. The Nazi forces had motor transport and panzer divisions, which Napoleon had not. Goebbels told his diary that Hitler had asked him to visit the Wolf's Lair more often, every week or so; but five weeks passed before another invitation came.²⁴

A week after Barbarossa began Goebbels ran into unexpected problems with Rosenberg. On the day before his visit to HQ, Hitler had ruled that Rosenberg's Ost-ministry, and not Goebbels, should control all propaganda in the east.²⁵ Goebbels vainly referred to the decree of September 1939 which entrusted to his ministry all 'practical execution' of propaganda.²⁶ His old rival was trying to become the next tsar, he decided.²⁷ As the years passed Rosenberg proved woefully incapable of organizing on an imperial scale, and Goebbels contemptuously referred to his apparatus as the 'Cha-ost' ministry.²⁸ 'If only we had proceeded more shrewdly in the east,' he would reflect in 1944, 'and if only we had made clear to the peoples there that we were coming not as conquerors but as liberators from bolshevism, the decisive blow against the Soviet Union might have met with success.'²⁹

At first as the Wehrmacht advanced the jubilant natives had greeted Hitler's troops with garlands of flowers, making no attempt to adopt the scorched-earth policies demanded by Stalin.³⁰ Goebbels stressed in his propaganda that their common enemy was their 'Jewish-bolshevik' oppressors.³¹ Rosenberg however pursued very different policies.³² He pronounced all Soviet citizens equally culpable for having tolerated bolshevism, and acted accordingly. Although there were virtually no printing presses or paper, and although 'every nail and pane of glass' had to be imported from Germany, it was Goebbels' task to cover the eastern territories with (Rosenberg's) propaganda. His ministry blocked Rosenberg's plans where it could, but that was not often.³³ 'We managed to prevent the total eradication of the Ukrainian intelligentsia,' reported Dr Taubert early in 1945. But it was an unequal fight. Rosenberg unhelpfully declared all Soviet citizens 'sub-humans' and wondered why they flocked

1941

to the ranks of the partisans. It would take Goebbels a year to get an odious S.S. brochure called Sub-Humans withdrawn.³⁴ He would fight equally hard to have the Ost-badge issued to Russian slave laborers replaced by something smacking less obviously of the badge worn by Jews.³⁵ Gunter d'Alquen told him that the Ukrainians who had, as the Germans marched in, joyfully dug up ancient icons which they had concealed for decades, now lived in mortal terror of these new Nazi oppressors.

AS Goebbels flew down to Salzburg for the Mozart festival he dipped into a one-hundred-page book by an American, entitled *Germany Must Perish!*³⁶ The author, Theodore N. Kaufman, proposed the 'summary sterilization' of all Germans. 'Germany must perish forever!' wrote Kaufman. 'In fact—not in fancy.' The dust cover carried endorsements from *Time* magazine, the *Washington Post*, and the *New York Times*.³⁷

It was an extraordinary book. 'Well,' dictated Goebbels gleefully to Otte. 'This Jew has done a disservice to the enemy. If he had composed this book at my behest he couldn't have done a better job.'³⁸ He decided to issue one million copies to German soldiers; after initially shelving this on legal grounds, fearing American reprisals against German copyrights, he issued the book with a photograph showing President Roosevelt apparently dictating the contents.³⁹

Solutions to the Jewish problem were never far from his mind. In August 1940 he had discussed with Hitler the liquidation by the Soviet N.K.V.D. of the intelligentsia in the Baltic states. Goebbels had thoroughly approved. Without their intelligentsia, he had pointed out, the Baltic states were emasculated.⁴⁰ Later that month he and Hitler again agreed that Europe's Jews should all eventually be shipped off to Madagascar.⁴¹ When Goebbels visited Kattowitz in September 1940 the gauleiter Fritz Bracht had confirmed that all the Jews there had been deported.⁴²

For Goebbels there were two difficulties: Neither the broad German public nor their Führer shared his satanic antisemitism. He studied Hitler's attitudes carefully during a dinner with Hans Frank, upon whose Polish domain, the Government-General, fell the task of absorbing the Reich's detritus of unwanted Jews.⁴³ The same Hitler who had issued ruthless orders for the execution of the Soviet commissars was by no means as hostile as Goebbels desired toward western Europe's more cultivated Jews. He heard Hitler speak warmly of both the composer Gustav Mahler and the producer Max Reinhardt (Max Goldmann), and conceded that in their performances the Jews were often 'not bad.'⁴⁴

The public attitude was the lesser of these two problems. Goebbels got to work on that with the only three antisemitic films that his studios ever produced, *The Rothschilds* (premiered on July 17, 1940), *Jud Süß* (September 24), and *The Eternal Jew*; this third film contained such distressing scenes of Jewish ritual slaughter that Goebbels ordered an expurgated version made for the more squeamish members of the public.⁴⁵

His own visceral hatred of the Jews had become more radical since 1940. Physically liquidating them now seemed an increasingly viable solution. If it was possible to liquidate the insane, if Göring's air force was killing the relatively innocent English by the thousand, why should the 'guilt-laden' Jews be spared? Goebbels had discussed the euthanasia project ('the covert liquidation of the mentally ill,' he called it) with Bouhler on January 30, 1941. Bouhler had informed him that they had quietly disposed of eighty thousand so far, with sixty thousand more still to go. 'Hard work, but necessary too,' applauded Goebbels.⁴⁶ To counter public disquiet he commissioned from leading film director Wolfgang Liebeneiner, the Steven Spielberg of the day, a harrowing film on the human freaks whom a compassionate Third Reich was pleased to put out of their misery.⁴⁷

To him the Jews were fair game. Thus when Jewish ringleaders triggered strikes in Nazi-occupied Holland in February 1941 he demanded that 'this Jewish rabble' be hanged.⁴⁸ Visiting Posen soon after, he heard from the gauleiter Arthur Greiser of how he was cleansing the surrounding Warthegau. 'There has been all manner of liquidating going on here,' he reported approvingly in his diary, 'particularly of the Jewish garbage.'⁴⁹ He saw every justification: had the Jews not declared war on the Reich?⁵⁰ He was wont to say that the advantage of the Nazis' being branded worldwide as antisemites was that they could now do with the Jews as they saw fit.⁵¹ Primarily he wanted to expel all Berlin's Jews. They formed the dangerous nucleus of an enemy intelligentsia. Hans Hinkel, Goebbels' specialist on Jewish affairs, had reported in September 1940 that there were still some seventy-two thousand in the city. The intermediate aim was to deport five hundred a month to the south-east; as soon as the war ended the rest would be sent back to the east.⁵² Later that month Hinkel informed Goebbels that about four million Jews still lived in Hitler's present dominions. 'The Madagascar plan, which has now been given the go-ahead, provides for about three and a half million of these to be shipped to Madagascar over approximately eighteen months after the war.'⁵³

'Dr Goebbels,' Tiessler told the party chancellery, 'regards every Jew as a counter-propagandist. Henceforth Jews should rent out accommodation only to other Jews.'⁵⁴ Albert Speer agreed with him fervently, though for other reasons. According to his figures there were over twenty-three thousand Jewish homes in the city. His official diary* shows that at the beginning of 1941 he had initiated a cold-blooded slum-clearance plan which involved evicting Jewish tenants and cramming them into other already overcrowded Jewish homes.⁵⁵ But no matter how many ordinances Goebbels issued, the Jews found ways to circumvent them;

*I.e., the original diary, not the sanitized and retyped version which Speer artfully deposited in the German federal archives after his release from Spandau prison, and from which is excised all reference to his infamous Hauptabteilung Umsiedlung (Main Reshousing Office) which conducted the evictions.

and although he repeated to Dr Gutterer in April 1941 a suggestion that the Jews should be forced to wear a distinctive badge, this idea too made slow progress.⁵⁶

The direct expulsion of the Jews from Berlin was not yet practicable. The cleansing of Vienna had been given priority, and the eastern railroad system was overburdened with war transports.⁵⁷ Besides, some thirty thousand of Berlin's Jews were working in munitions factories.⁵⁸ Goebbels still felt, as he complained to Hitler on March 17, 1941, that his city should not have to house around seventy thousand Jews. He told Gutterer afterward however that the Führer had still not decided that Berlin should be 'freed of its Jews.'⁵⁹ Gutterer at once called an inter-ministerial meeting attended by representatives of both Speer and Heydrich. The latter's man, S.S. Sturmbannführer Adolf Eichmann, went over the recent history: Hitler, he explained, had put Heydrich in charge of evacuating the Jews, and Heydrich had recently developed a plan to lodge them all in Poland though Hans Frank was reluctant to absorb any more there. Eichmann reminded the ministry that their manufacturing industry needed every available Jew.⁶⁰ Speer's man (probably Dietrich Clahe, chief of his infamous Rehousing Office) explained that Speer wanted the twenty thousand Jewish homes in Berlin emptied as a reserve for air-raid housing losses.⁶¹

Marc
17

Goebbels discussed this briefly with Hitler on June 19. Hans Frank was visiting too and made no secret of his eagerness to displace his unwanted Jews still further east once Russia was defeated. 'A fitting punishment,' philosophized Goebbels, 'given the way that they have pitted country against country and plotted the war.' 'The Führer,' he routinely added, 'also prophesied all this to the Jews.' Hitler reassured Frank that Poland was envisaged only as a transit camp for Europe's Jews; in due course they would all be deported further east.⁶²

Thwarted in his immediate intention, Goebbels pressed on with the plan for Jews to be forced to wear a distinguishing badge in public, explaining that they were getting more uppity with each day that passed. Polish women in Berlin already had to wear a 'P' badge, and Jewish street workers a yellow armband.⁶³ He directed Taubert to discuss this idea with the Gestapo. In fact the Gestapo had first mooted the idea in 1938.⁶⁴ Late in 1939 the propaganda ministry had independently suggested that Jews should wear some kind of lapel pin to facilitate the new ordinance that they give up their seats in public transport; the idea had been put to Himmler but got no further.⁶⁵ The Gestapo's chief, S.S. Brigadeführer Heinrich Müller, told Taubert that Heydrich had made similar proposals ever since 1940. Tiessler asked Bormann if a decision from Hitler was likely soon, and there the matter rested until the summer of 1941.⁶⁶

As Hitler's armies invaded the Baltic states in June and July 1941, expelling the recent Russian conquerors, the natives of those three countries exacted terrible retribution on the Jews who had figured prominently among the murderous commissars. Shortly before Goebbels saw Hitler that August he learned from d'Alquén of this bloody sequel, and pitilessly

referred once again to Hitler's famous prophecy of January 1939.⁶⁷ During that month Speer evicted five thousand more Berlin Jews from their homes.⁶⁸ Goebbels applauded, and rhetorically asked his staff what their returning soldiers would think if they found the Jews still living in eight-room homes and for ever whining in public transport.⁶⁹ 'I don't want to see the mob taking the Jewish problem into its own hands again like 1938.'⁷⁰ 'You only have to imagine,' he dictated to Otte, 'what the Jews would do with us if they were ever in power.'⁷¹

SPEER's air-raid shelter for Goebbels was scheduled for completion at the end of August 1941, and high time too. Autumn was approaching and Churchill's bomber squadrons would soon return. Even the Russians had recently sent bombers over Berlin.⁷²

Stalin was playing Goebbels at his own game. One evening an enemy voice from Moscow broke into the brief silence before the evening news bulletin and intoned blasphemies against the Führer.⁷³ The same voice used subsequent pauses to pass sarcastic comments on each preceding item. There seemed to be no adequate counter-measure. Goebbels, who had total control of the radio news, ordered the bulletins read ever faster, and then had to start rumors to explain away this undignified verbal gallop.⁷⁴ The enemy voices continued. They must have seemed like an ill omen from the east.

Scene?

1 18 GOEBBELS reported to Hitler's HQ on August 18, 1941 for the first time in over five weeks. Hitler was recovering from an attack of marshland dysentery and, Goebbels was malevolently pleased to hear, some kind of attack brought on by a stand-up row with Ribbentrop. In the four hours that they spent strolling through the heavily patrolled woodlands within the compound Hitler admitted that Barbarossa had run into difficulties. His experts had credited Stalin with five thousand tanks: He had closer to twenty thousand, and not ten thousand warplanes but twenty.⁷⁵ However he put Stalin's losses at three million dead, and he had already taken 1.4 million Soviet prisoners.* Perhaps, continued Hitler, Stalin would ask for peace terms. He would grant them, provided that his forces were totally disarmed. He had no qualms about letting bolshevism as such survive. He hoped to conclude the campaign by the onset of winter.

Goebbels touched upon the topic of euthanasia.⁷⁷ In a recent sermon Count von Galen, bishop of Münster, had threatened to have the 'murderers' prosecuted. While Goebbels felt that Galen should be hanged for sedition, Hitler argued that in general they must avoid all potentially divisive subjects, like the inter-denominational conflict.⁷⁸ Undeterred, Goebbels raised the Jewish problem and showed the Führer Kaufman's book, *Germany must Perish!* Hitler assured him that his sinister prophecy of January 1939 was automatically being fulfilled. 'In the east,' reported

* At Potsdam Marshal Stalin confided to Churchill in July 1945 that Soviet losses during the war had amounted to five million killed or missing.⁷⁶

Sept 1941

NO ROOM FOR TWO OF US 373

Goebbels, dictating this diary passage to his secretary Richard Otte, 'the Jews are having to foot the bill; they have already paid it in part in Germany.' Angered by the Kaufman book, Hitler gave him carte-blanche to introduce the badge for the Jews. Goebbels decided that it should be a yellow cloth star with the word *Jude* emblazoned across it.⁷⁹

As propaganda minister he kept his finger on the pulse of German public opinion pulse at several vital points. His staff closely analyzed all incoming mail, including anonymous letters; a brutally frank weekly morale report was compiled by Amt III of Himmler's security service; and his own network of forty-two gau-level Propaganda Offices (Reichspropagandaämter) reported each Monday on public morale (Stimmung) and behavior (Haltung). They in turn drew their information from cells in individual factories and party branches. Dr Immanuel Schäffer, who had to collate this data at the ministry, found a wide measure of agreement between them. Broadly speaking, while behavior remained remarkably stable, public morale fluctuated wildly.⁸⁰

Goebbels feared that in the long term the easy victories of the Wehrmacht during the early weeks of Barbarossa had been devastating for morale.⁸¹ He recalled his trusty Alfred-Ingemar Berndt, now an S.S. Oberführer, from North Africa, to take over his central Propaganda Department.⁸² Berndt secretly confided to Himmler that his job would be 'to carry the German public through the coming winter.' 'Our propaganda this summer has blundered badly,' he added. 'We've been in the illusions business, we've painted everything too rosy.' Churchill's method, he reminded Himmler, was to paint the situation to his public in the darkest hue as possible, but to stress that in the end British arms would be triumphant.⁸³ British analysts detected a shift in Goebbels propaganda output to a more somber mood.⁸⁴

FIVE more weeks passed before he saw Hitler again. Barbarossa had regained its lost momentum. At five P.M. on September 20, 1941 German radio announced the captured of Kiev, capital of the Ukraine. Two million Russian prisoners were now in German hands. As Goebbels and Hadamowsky flew into the Wolf's Lair for lunch on the twenty-third the news was of even greater victories as four Soviet armies, encircled by army groups Center and South, faced destruction.⁸⁵ Hitler told them that the worst would be over by mid-October. He would follow through with thrusts toward Kharkov, Stalingrad, and the river Don, to rob Stalin of his coal- and arms-production centers. Leningrad would be starved out, then plowed literally into the ground.⁸⁶ Goebbels learned that Hitler was putting Reinhard Heydrich in charge of an increasingly fractious Prague. 'Such situations,' the minister dictated approvingly, 'call for a strong man.'

He found Heydrich here at Hitler's HQ and thus he was able to coordinate with him their measures against the Jews.⁸⁷ The new badge had been gazetted into law two or three weeks earlier, but there had been

unforeseen consequences: There was loud public criticism of the Yellow Star, and some Germans were going out of their way to offer Jews seats in crowded public transport. Goebbels was furious, and ordered that they be reminded of Kaufman's slogan that Germany 'must perish forever from this earth.'⁸⁸ To rub it in he issued through the party's Reich Propaganda Directorate (RPL) a leaflet headed, 'Whenever you see this badge, remember what the Jew has inflicted upon our nation.'⁸⁹

In Hans Fritzsche's view it was this unexpected sentimentalism of the Berliner that finally decided Goebbels on the rapid and ruthless deportation of the Jews.⁹⁰ Dictating his diary on September 23 the propaganda minister noted that this would still have to await the end of Barbarossa. 'They are all to be transported ultimately to [regions?] adjacent to the bolshevik [rump territory?]' he dictated.* Hitler had confirmed to him that little by little all Jews were to be expelled from Berlin, Vienna, and Prague.⁹¹ This conformed with what he had told Himmler. The aim was to evacuate them all by the end of 1941: First to occupied Poland, then, in the spring of 1942, further east into occupied Russia. The first sixty thousand, were to be expelled from Berlin, Vienna, and Prague. The first sixty thousand, Himmler had thereupon notified Heydrich, would be dumped in the Lodz ghetto.⁹² To the distinctly disenchanted Nazi governor of Lodz, Friedrich Uebelhör, Himmler wrote that such was 'the Führer's will.'⁹³ 'All the Jews are to be removed,' Hitler repeated during lunch on October 6. 'And not just to the Government-General [former Poland] but right on to the east. It is only our pressing need for war transport that stops us doing so right now.'⁹⁴

2 At five-thirty a.m. on October 2, 1941, Hitler's armies began Typhoon, the attempt to capture Moscow. Nearly two thousand tanks moved off in blinding clouds of dust. Again the Führer had kept Goebbels in the dark. At Goebbels' request however he made a flying visit to Berlin to speak at the Sport Palace on the third: His train arrived at 1:10 P.M., and he spoke at five. Goebbels had packed the front rows with combat-injured men like in the good old days.⁹⁵ Speaking *ex tempore*, Hitler delivered a witty, boisterous oration and the Berlin audience, which was not the usual stuffed-shirt party crowd, roared approval. He boasted that Russia was 'already broken' and 'would never arise again.' Gales of laughter gusted around the vast hall as he mocked Churchill's self-proclaimed victories; deafening applause followed as he pronounced his own. As Goebbels accompanied him back to his special train at seven-thirty, Hitler prophesied that ('provided the weather stays fine') they would have destroyed the Soviet armed forces within the next fourteen days.

For a few days, as a news blackout prevailed, it seemed that he was right. As the first snows drifted idly down on October 7 General Jodl called it the most crucial day of the campaign.⁹⁶ On the eighth he went

* The photocopy is only partially decipherable. On orders from the minister of the interior in Bonn the German federal archives on July 1, 1993 refused to allow the author to inspect the original image. See Author's Acknowledgments, page viii.

1941

further: 'We have finally and without exaggeration won this war.'⁹⁷ Later that day Hitler sent for Otto Dietrich and his young deputy Heinz Lorenz and dictated to them a written briefing for the press; he also directed General Rudolf Schmundt to give to Dietrich an order of the day announcing that Marshal Timoshenko's armies were trapped. Dietrich drafted a press statement. General Jodl approved the text.⁹⁸ 'The Russian armies have been annihilated,' it said in part. And, 'All that remains in Russia is policing work.' Arriving in Berlin the next day, October 9, Dietrich told a press conference that Russia was 'done for.'

The first that Goebbels knew was when he read the afternoon headlines: 'THE GREAT HOUR HAS STRUCK: THE CAMPAIGN IN THE EAST DECIDED!' He limped furiously up and down his home's carpeted corridor. He phoned Major Martin, his High Command liaison officer. 'Are there any fresh bulletins since this morning?' he snarled.⁹⁹ As fanfares announced the special communiqué, on the eastern front it was now pouring with rain. Agonies of uncertainty beset Goebbels. On the tenth he telephoned Jodl. The general feigned ignorance and dismay and warned that the war would continue all winter.¹⁰⁰ Goebbels sent agents out into the beerhalls to sample public opinion. The people had all heard Dietrich say the campaign was 'decided' but understood it as *won*.

Goebbels switched to damage-control. He put it about that Hitler himself had ordered the communiqué solely as a ploy to jolt the Japanese into some kind of action.¹⁰¹ Taking a dramatically independent line, he tried to defuse the High Command's gaffe. In the *Völkischer Beobachter* he argued that while victory was indeed certain, nobody could say when; then, in *Das Reich*, as the first wintry blizzards began to harass Hitler's mud-soaked and exhausted riflemen, he published an editorial entitled, 'When, or How?'¹⁰² This too, despite the question in the title, talked of Germany's victory as inevitable. 'The chance which the German nation has today is its greatest, but also its last.' The entire nation, he wrote, must make one gigantic effort for victory. With powerful echoes of Winston Churchill, on whom he was now increasingly modeling his oratory, appealing to Britain in the dark hours of 1940, Dr Goebbels now exhorted: 'Let us therefore go forth and fight, and labor until victory is ours.'

43: Exodus

DISGUISED as 'Dr Sedgwick,' 'Putzi' Hanfstaengl was now well housed in Washington and advising President Roosevelt on his former top Nazi pals. 'Always smile,' was Goebbels' maxim, he said: 'Lie with a smile, deny with a smile, intrigue with a smile.'¹ Goebbels was still smiling. It was noticeable that he barely mentioned the United States in his articles.² Neither he nor Hitler was worried by Washington; the Führer considered Japan's powerful Pacific fleet sufficient to hold the Americans in check.³ When Roosevelt's lend-lease act was passed Goebbels scoffed that this was purely a means for the Americans to inherit Britain's assets when the time came.⁴

br. Hitler had imposed restrictions on all hostilities with the United States. He eased them marginally in February 1941 although he would not allow Dr Goebbels to take the gloves off in his propaganda, even when Roosevelt ordered the seizure of German merchant ships and their crews.⁵ Goebbels gradually stepped up his shortwave propaganda transmissions across the Atlantic.⁶ Writing under a pseudonym he published a leader article in the *VB* depicting Roosevelt as the helpless puppet of Jewish advisers.⁷ He issued a rare photograph showing the president in full masonic regalia.⁸ Visiting Berlin however his Transocean news agency expert in the United States warned him not to bank on the ethnic Germans there—they were either rotten through and through, or simpletons; he advised Goebbels to make the propaganda to America crude and unsophisticated.⁹ He prepared a fifteen-minute film, *A Stroll through America*, portraying Roosevelt with his 'Jewish henchmen,' the strikes and hunger marches, the Negro jazz and jitterbug, and the prevalence of kidnapping—though not mentioning Charles Lindbergh, whose baby's alleged kidnapper was a German. The film pirated American newsreels, however, and the foreign ministry warned that showing it abroad would invite legal repercussions from the United States.¹⁰

Germans were not liked in America. When the New York evening paper *P.M.* offered a prize for the wittiest greetings telegram for Goebbels' next birthday, it received literally thousands of entries: 204 entrants had rhymed *forty-four* and *no more*; 198 had a pun about a '44 revolver. 'May your next lie read, I am alive and well,' wrote one man. 'Hope you get lockjaw and seasick at the same time,' wished another. 'God keep you—but immediately,' pleaded yet a third.¹¹

1941

AS he received the winning 'Goebbelsgram'—its text is not known—from New York, the minister began composing his own most venomous leader article ever for *Das Reich*, entitled 'The Jews are to blame!'

His mass expulsion of the Jews from Berlin was beginning. On October 14, 1941 S.S. General Kurt Daluege signed the formal order as national chief of police and the deportations began the next day.¹² Five hundred or a thousand at a time, family by family, the Berlin Jews were rounded up, corralled in the ruined synagogue in Levetzow Strasse and then loaded aboard passenger trains at Grünwald station for freighting to the east.¹³ The first train with 1,103 Jews was dispatched on October 18; three more followed on October 24 (1,024 Jews) and 27 (1,009 Jews), and November 1 (1,033).¹⁴ All four were bound for the ghetto at Lodz. Between October 18 and November 2, confirmed Speer's diary, some 4,500 Jews were 'evacuated,' releasing to him and Gauleiter Goebbels one thousand apartments—supposedly for bombed-out Berliners, but the cream of these vacant buildings went to their closest cronies.¹⁵

Hitler was neither consulted nor informed. Ten days after the forced exodus began, he referred, soliloquizing over supper to Himmler and Heydrich, to the way the Jews had started this war. 'Let nobody tell me,' Hitler added, 'that despite that we can't park them in the marshier parts of Russia!' 'By the way,' he added, 'it's not a bad thing that public rumor attributes to us a plan to exterminate the Jews.' He pointed out however that he had no intention of starting anything at present. 'There's no point in adding to one's difficulties at a time like this!'¹⁶

What did the 'east' hold for Berlin's Jews? In the Baltic states they were loved least of all.¹⁷ Nor were the other eastern territories healthier destinations.¹⁸ Berlin's fifth trainload, of 1,030 Jews, set out for Minsk on November 14. Of Minsk's 238,000 citizens in 1939 one hundred thousand had been Jews, many of them skilled workers.¹⁹ By December 1941 only eighteen thousand of the original Jews had not fled or been shot. These and the newcomers from Berlin survived if they were fit for work; the rest died or were put to death a few months later. Some 3,500 unemployable Jews of the seven thousand sent there from Berlin, Bremen, Vienna, and Brno 'on the Führer's orders' during November 1941 were liquidated in the last four days of July 1942.²⁰

So much for Minsk. The trainload of Berlin's Jews sent to Kaunas in Lithuania on November 17 probably fared no better.²¹ Goebbels had visited the country two weeks before. As in the other Baltic states, the Soviet secret police had deported forty thousand Lithuanians to Siberia in 1940.²² 'The Jews,' Goebbels learned during his visit, 'were mainly active as G.P.U. [secret police] agents and informants, and they are to blame for the deaths of countless Lithuanian nationalists and intellectuals.' When the tide turned in June 1941 and the Russians were driven out, the Lithuanians took revenge on the sixty thousand remaining Jews, liquidating 3,800 in Kaunas alone.²³ Hundreds of the rest, Goebbels learned, were being shot.²⁴ Touring the ghetto in Vilnius he shuddered at the sight of Jews huddled together, 'frightful shapes you can't even

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look at, let alone touch.' 'The Jews are like the lice of civilized mankind,' he dictated in another revealing entry the next day. 'They've got to be exterminated somehow ... Spare them now and you'll fall victim to them later on.' Hobbling awkwardly around this cheerless, snow-covered second city of Lithuania he reached one firm conclusion: 'Here I would not want to be buried.'²⁵

27

On November 27, 1941 Speer reported to Goebbels on his efforts to make good the air-raid damage in Berlin. Their third *Aktion* against the Jews was just beginning.²⁶ That day a thousand more, the seventh trainload, departed from Berlin, bound this time for Riga, capital of Latvia. All would die three mornings later.

Like Lithuania, Latvia had begun killing its Jews soon after Barbarossa began, in revenge for the 33,038 Latvians kidnapped or murdered by the Soviet secret police since June 1940. In July 1941 there had been seventy thousand Jews in Latvia—the rest, some thirty thousand, had fled with their Russian benefactors. German Sonderkommandos manned by Latvian auxiliary police, usually relatives of the Russians' victims, had murdered about thirty thousand Jews by October 1941.²⁷ In October Hitler ordered a big concentration camp built just outside Riga to house the Jews expelled from the Reich and the occupied Czech territories. A site was eventually chosen at Salaspils to house twenty-five thousand Jews from Germany.²⁸ But construction was delayed, and when they were told to expect these twenty-five thousand to begin arriving on November 10, with another twenty-five thousand bound for Minsk, Rosenberg's officials appealed for a postponement.²⁹ The army also protested at this needless burden on already scarce railroad capacity.³⁰

21

For this and other reasons, by November 21 only seven thousand of Berlin's seventy-seven thousand Jews had been expelled.³¹ At the end of November, Speer's diary records, he booted three thousand more out of their apartments.³²

Goebbels uttered not the slightest sympathy for these innocent victims of his obsession, although he was well aware that public resistance was growing. He put up subway posters proclaiming 'The Jews are our misfortune,' with texts explaining precisely why.³³ Cruel mishaps began to occur. Goebbels had denied to film actor Joachim Gottschalk the role of Leitwein in the new color film *The Golden City* unless he divorce his Jewish wife or at least force her to emigrate to Switzerland.³⁴ When the star's colleagues interceded for him, Goebbels screamed at them about the 'sexual serfdom' of simple ex-matelots like Gottschalk who were, he said, an easy prey for the sexual knavery of Jewesses. Refused the role, Gottschalk killed himself, his wife Meta, and his eight-year-old son Michael that November. Goebbels dictated in his diary: 'We are living in very harsh times and fate is sometimes pitiless toward the individual.'³⁵ He then gave the screw another heartless twist. Already deprived of their own telephones, he forbade Jews to use public payphones either. In a cynical and not unrelated ruling, he prohibited the use of the word *liquidation* in connection with their 'summary executions in the east.'

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Nov 1941

That word, he said, was to be reserved for the crimes perpetrated by the Soviets³⁶

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IT was during these same weeks that he dictated his tract entitled 'The Jews are to blame.'³⁷ He ordered it given the widest circulation on the eastern front.³⁸

It appeared in *Das Reich* on November 16, 1941. A few excerpts suffice to illustrate its pernicious thrust. 'The Jews wanted this war,' he argued, 'and now they have it.' They were getting their just desserts. An eye for an eye. All Jews alike, whether languishing in an eastern ghetto or whining for war from New York, were conspiring against Germany. The Yellow Star, he argued, was akin to a 'hygienic prophylactic,' because the most dangerous were those otherwise not recognizable as Jews. To those who might bleat that the Jews were humans too he pointed out that the same could be said of muggers, rapists, and pimps. 'Suddenly one has the impression that all of Berlin's Jews are either darling little babies who wouldn't hurt a fly, or fragile old ladies.' 'Were we to lose this war,' he continued, 'these oh-so-harmless Jewish worthies would suddenly turn into rapacious wolves. . . . That's what happened in Bessarabia and the Baltic states after the bolsheviks marched in, and neither the people nor the governments there had had the slightest sympathy for them. For us, in our fight against the Jews, there is no going back.'

The article displayed a far more uncompromising face than Hitler's towards the Jews. When the Führer came to Berlin for Luftwaffe general Ernst Uder's funeral he again instructed Goebbels to pursue a policy against the Jews 'that does not cause us endless difficulties,' and told him to go easy on mixed marriages in future.³⁹

Dieter Wisliceny, one of Eichmann's closest associates, would describe the Goebbels article in *Das Reich* as a watershed in the Final Solution of the Jewish problem.⁴⁰ The S.S. took it as a sign from above. Adolf Eichmann would admit in his unpublished memoirs, 'It's quite possible that I got orders to direct this or that railroad transport to Riga.'⁴¹ On the last day of November, on the orders of the local S.S. commander Friedrich Jeckeln, four thousand of Riga's unwanted Jews were trucked five miles down the Dvinsk highway to Skiatowa, plundered, and machine-gunned into two or three pits.⁴² According to one army colonel who witnessed it, a trainload of Jews from Berlin—those expelled three days before—arrived in the midst of this *Aktion*; its passengers were taken straight out to the pits and shot.⁴³ This happened even as Hitler, hundreds of miles away in the Wolf's Lair, was instructing Himmler that these Berlin Jews were not to be liquidated.⁴⁴

ON the eastern front bitter frost suddenly replaced the autumn quagmires. Long freezing nights gripped central Europe. With them came the British bombers. The bunker at No. 20 Hermann-Göring Strasse was hung with costly paintings; there were armchairs, a bath, and air conditioning. On November 13 Goebbels told his adjutant to see to it that a piano was

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See the preceding page

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installed.⁴⁵ His children were now back, living out in Schwanenwerder with Magda.⁴⁶ But the matrimonial strains were also returning. Later in November the diary hears of Goebbels badgering an 'understanding' Hitler about 'a series of personal problems.'⁴⁷

It would be wrong to infer that he had no concern for his non-Jewish fellow Germans. He pestered Speer to provide more shelters.⁴⁸ He was the first to question whether the army had made proper provision for the coming winter.⁴⁹ The words 'met. report' began to figure on his daily agenda. He had asked the army months before, in August, if he should announce a ski collection; General Jodl had scrawled in red the flippant retort that their troops would have no time for 'winter sports.'⁵⁰ In October Goebbels suggested a public appeal for woolen garments—just in case. The High Command again scornfully turned him down.⁵¹ 'In the winter,' Jodl now said, 'we shall be warmly billeted in Leningrad and Moscow. Leave the worrying to us.' 'If we had put this in hand at the proper time,' Goebbels would write to Hitler three years later, justifying his views, 'it would have taken care of one of the worst problems we faced in the winter of 1941–42.'⁵²

- 141 The army's quartermaster-general, the formidable General Eduard Wagner, had neglected the problem until mid-October 1941.⁵³ Over lunch with Hitler he complacently claimed that one-third to one-half of the winter equipment had already reached the eastern front.⁵⁴ He staged at his field HQ a totally bogus exhibition of this winter equipment, including wooden cabins, trench-heaters, ear muffs, and fur-lined coats and boots, and boldly invited Dr Goebbels to see it for himself. Still suspicious, Dr Goebbels asked him how much was already available. 'Enough to equip every soldier two or three times over,' lied Wagner.⁵⁵

'That's overwhelming,' Goebbels dictated the next day as Hitler and Jodl themselves visited the exhibition. 'They've thought of everything.'⁵⁶ Both he and Hitler were thoroughly taken in.⁵⁷ Hitler instructed him to send the exhibition on tour round Berlin, Munich, and Vienna. 'We had already set up the exhibition on Unter den Linden in conjunction with the Christmas Fair,' he would recall later, 'when suddenly the catastrophe overtook us.'⁵⁸ Several times after that he reminded Hitler and Göring of how General Wagner had duped them, but three years passed before Wagner, one of the July 1944 traitors, met his Maker.

AFTER his visit to Lithuania, Goebbels witnessed how ruthlessly Hitler dealt with the recalcitrant. At the party anniversary in Munich, Hitler prefaced his secret speech to the gauleiters by having Gauleiter Joseph Wagner of Bochum physically evicted from their midst. His wife had written an imprudent religious letter to a relative. The brown-uniformed audience was stunned by Hitler's little display of brutality. Viktor Lutze took in the clucking and clatter that broke out, as though a fox had just raided a chicken coop.⁵⁹ Others like Goebbels felt a frisson of approval for the Orwellian scene.

When they met in Berlin again, on November 29, Hitler's armies had

Dec 1941

begun to retreat for the first time. Bitterly criticizing Brauchitsch, his army commander-in-chief, he remarked that he had always opposed occupying the larger Soviet cities; he had no interest in capturing even Moscow—it was not worth it, just to stage a victory parade there. But when his offensive resumed in 1942, he promised, he would advance on the Caucasus for the oil, and he would conquer the Crimea, as a colony to be called the East Gothic gau. 'What need,' he asked, 'do we have for colonies on other continents?'⁶⁰

The Russian winter's savagery temporarily put paid to all these dreams. A German reconnaissance battalion reached the outskirts of Moscow in a raging blizzard, but got no further. On December 5 and 6 Stalin's armies opened their counter-offensive. German tank tracks froze to the ground; their guns jammed; their explosives fizzled and squibbed. Barbarossa had come to a standstill.

GOEBBELS did not share Hitler's hopes for a timely Japanese intervention. He expected Tokyo to sit this war out.⁶¹ But Ribbentrop secretly encouraged the Japanese to believe that if they declared war on the United States, Hitler would follow suit. When a Reuters communiqué on the night of Sunday December 7 announced that the Japanese had struck at the American Pacific fleet in Hawaii, Hitler telephoned Goebbels and said that he would leave for Berlin by train the following evening. At first Washington admitted only to having lost two battleship and a carrier at Pearl Harbor, with four more battleships and four cruisers damaged. 'That,' wrote Goebbels with satisfaction, 'is a loss of blood ... that they'll never make good.' He was thrilled by Japan's infamous act: She had had no real alternative. Acceptance of Washington's 'provocative and insolent' demands would have meant her abdication as a great power. 'The Japanese went ahead quite calmly and deliberately,' he wrote approvingly, 'and did not take any other power into their confidence.'

There could be no doubt whatsoever about Hitler's next move. 'We shall have no choice,' wrote Goebbels, 'but ... to declare war on the United States.' Now, he gloated, Roosevelt had got his war. 'Of course,' he added, 'what he's got is very different from what he anticipated. He certainly imagined that he could deal with Germany first.' War with the United States had long seemed likely, particularly since the speech by Hitler in Munich a month before.⁶² With Japan taking the first step, what Goebbels described in his hitherto unpublished diary as a 'gasps of relief' escaped the German public: The psychological terror, the uncertainty, was over.

A mood of invincibility swept over the Nazi leaders. Hitler remarked that they now had an ally, undefeated in three thousand years.⁶³ Goebbels listened to Churchill's broadcast and concluded from his delivery that he was drunk. Hearing Roosevelt's address to the Congress he remarked that he had taken care not to provoke Nazi Germany. 'But it is too late for that,' he happily dictated. 'We are now in the fortunate position of being able to pay them back.'⁶⁴

He hurried round to see Hitler immediately after he arrived in Berlin at eleven A.M. on the ninth.

He is filled with joy at this fortunate turn of events [recorded Goebbels]. . . . He rightly points out that he always expected this. That's true. . . . He always expressed the view that, when the hour struck the appeasers in Tokyo would have nothing left to say. . . .

Hitler told Goebbels that he had known nothing beforehand. 'He was taken completely by surprise and, like myself, at first didn't dare to believe it.' In his estimate the Japanese now controlled the Pacific Ocean. 'The Japanese adopted precisely the right tactics by attacking right away and not getting drawn into lengthy preliminaries.' 'The Führer,' Goebbels recorded, 'is rightly of the opinion that in modern warfare it is wholly out of date, even medieval, to issue an ultimatum. Once you make up your mind to defeat an enemy you should wade right in and not hang around until he's braced himself to take your blows.'

Hitler confirmed to Goebbels that he would declare war on the United States in his forthcoming Reichstag speech, though delaying it by two or three days, hoping to score a Pearl Harbor of his own against the U.S. navy in the Atlantic. 'He has already given our U-boats unrestricted orders to shoot on sight.' Hitler postponed the historic speech one more day, telling Dr Goebbels that he wanted to work over the text with particular care. He planned to attack Roosevelt mercilessly in it—'Thank goodness we no longer have to show him any consideration,' noted Goebbels.

In Japan, Goebbels summarized the next day in his diary, Germany had at last found a worthy ally, although she could not very well harp on that without hurting Italy's feelings.⁶⁵ In the Indian Ocean Japanese aircraft trapped and sank two of Britain's proudest warships, Prince of Wales and Repulse. At lunchtime Goebbels found Hitler filled with unstilted *Schadenfreude*.⁶⁶ *malicious glee*

They were now fighting a global war. The implications were immediately thrust upon Goebbels: Tokyo, eight time-zones ahead of Berlin, pleaded for the historic Reichstag session to be held early so that Japanese listeners could hear Hitler live declaring war on America; but if he spoke too early, most American listeners would be denied that pleasure.⁶⁷ Thus the deputies were convened at three P.M. on the eleventh. Everybody knew what was in the air, but Hitler teased them for a while. He revealed that Germany's losses so far in Barbarossa were around 160,000 dead, a figure which provoked a perceptible murmur. In a mocking tone he then laid into the 'warmonger' President Roosevelt with a biting irony that had the Kroll opera house rocking with unkind laughter.⁶⁸

At his ministerial conference the next morning Goebbels again warned against encouraging excessive optimism.⁶⁹ Over lunch Hitler however expressed confidence that Japan would soon take the Philippines, Hong-kong, and Singapore.⁷⁰ With less than utter candor he described the Wehrmacht's plight on the eastern front as less dire than might at first

Dec 1941

seem. There was pain and suffering, he agreed, but he hoped to reach the prescribed defensive lines without serious losses. Not for the last time the unpublished diaries show Hitler and Goebbels infusing each other with fresh courage in the face of a generally darkening situation with, this time, Japan as their rising sun. Goebbels drew upon the history of the party, conjuring up heroic analogies from the early Thirties showing how they had snatched victory from those hours of defeatist darkness before the dawn.⁷¹

Addressing the gauleiters while still in Berlin Hitler opted for greater candor. He confessed that he had spent sleepless nights worrying whether he was doing the right thing in declaring war on Roosevelt. 'The Führer,' Goebbels reported to his diary, 'is convinced that he would have had to declare war on the Americans sooner or later. . . . Now the conflict in the Far East drops into our laps as an added bonus.' He viewed the battle of the Atlantic with greater confidence. Whoever won there would win the war. Hitler predicted to the gauleiters that the western 'plutocracies' would not abandon their Far East possessions, but would fritter away their forces around the world. The present impasse on the Moscow front was, he said, no more than 'an unavoidable hitch.'⁷²

Far from the comforts of Berlin, Hitler's soldiers were dying agonizing deaths in the blizzards. The injured froze to death if they were not dragged under cover within minutes. From one of his staff Goebbels received a horrifying letter describing the useless tanks, the munitions, guns, and planes being blown up by retreating troops, and the army reinforcements arriving still wearing their thin Afrika Korps uniforms.⁷³ Returning by train on December 16 to the Wolf's Lair, Hitler dictated a famous Order of the Day, forbidding his soldiers to yield even one inch of the eastern front. His generals seemed paralyzed by their own plight.

On the same day, the sixteenth, Hitler sent for Goebbels; he confided to him the next day at his HQ that he had decided to replace all three army group commanders as well—they all had 'stomach problems,' he said: *magenkrank*. It is not plain if he was being sarcastic. He revealed that he was going to take over command from their 'church-going' C.-in-C., Field Marshal von Brauchitsch. 'The more pious the general,' agreed Goebbels, whose loathing of the general staff matched Hitler's, 'the more useless he is.'⁷⁴

There is no doubt that in the failure of these generals Goebbels saw his chance of establishing himself higher in Hitler's esteem. Before returning to Berlin he set out his own plan to rescue the eastern armies from freezing to death. He would launch a public appeal for woolen clothing. At first it seemed so unpretentious as to be almost ludicrous. But he calculated that this *Aktion* would help to take the country's mind off its other grim preoccupations. Hitler was unenthusiastic. He feared that the appeal would damage the Reich's impregnable image. Goebbels however won him round. Back in Berlin he called a joint conference with the High Command, the Post Office, and the transport and other ministries concerned. The bureaucrats expressed immediate doubts that

Dec 16

the public would rise to the occasion. The soldiers were downright hostile. Their obstructionism only spurred Goebbels, the crippled civilian, to greater efforts.⁷⁵

c 20 The next day, Saturday December 20, the propaganda minister broadcast an appeal that was to go down in history. 'Particularly during these festive days,' he said, 'countless Germans at home will be conscious of the debt that we all owe to our soldiers and above all those at the fighting front.' How could they best express this gratitude? 'The responsible Wehrmacht authorities,' he reassured his listeners, 'have done everything to provide the front with adequate equipment for the winter.' He saw no point in exposing the inefficiency of the war department. Nevertheless, he purred, the front needed winter gear. 'Top-boots, padded or fur-lined if possible; warm woolen clothing; socks, stockings, waist-coats, cardigans, pullovers, and warm (particularly woolen) underwear, vests, under-pants, body belts, chest and lung protectors, all manner of head-gear, ear-muffs, mittens, kneepads'—and so the list went on.

27 On December 27 the collecting *Aktion* began. It was a huge success. The public handed in sixty-seven million items of winter gear: Now the plodding desk-generals—men, snorted Goebbels, who would not have made it above junior adviser in his ministry—refused to shift them. Goebbels then ordered the party's welfare agencies to hand out this winter gear to the raw riflemen on the railroad stations as their trains passed through Germany en route to the front. Every document testifies to the uplift which this unique *Aktion* provided for home morale, as well as for the eastern front. When Goebbels phoned his Führer on New Year's Day, he basked in the latter's praise.⁷⁶ Together he and his Führer had saved the eastern armies. Their generals had finally proved their mediocrity, and the party had shown its mettle. In that respect, Goebbels was heard to say, it was actually a good thing that the war had not ended at Dunkirk.⁷⁷

Over the weeks that followed, the eastern front stabilized. Hitler told him that his elderly field commanders had lost their head. Not for nothing, he said, had he spent four years as an ordinary dogface infantryman. He knew a thing or two about front-line soldiers and their nerves that their generals did not.

7 'He is more admirable than ever,' dictated Goebbels to Otte for the diary.⁷⁸

Jan 7, '42

Jan 1942

44: A Fate Which Beggars All Description

IN New York an old enemy, Albert C. Grzesinski, former police chief in Berlin, proclaimed his intention of overthrowing the Nazis and taking power himself. With enemies like Grzesinski, reflected Goebbels, one barely needed allies.¹ He was not afraid of the Americans. There were limits to what even they could do. 'It isn't easy to raise and equip an army,' he commented, 'as we know only too well.'² He ordered anti-American propaganda prepared however, mocking their lack of culture and their grotesque jazz music.³ He had discussed a Japanese fanfare for announcing the coming Far East victories; a corresponding Italian fanfare was also to be selected 'in case there are any Italian victories.'⁴ Foreseeing race problems, he forbade any hint of the phrase Yellow Peril in their domestic propaganda.⁵

He found it difficult now to fault British propaganda. Dietrich had not helped with his premature announcement of victory in October. 'It's a pity,' Goebbels wrote, "that we have had so many different agencies cutting the ground away beneath our feet with their silliness."⁶ He told his staff that Churchill had done the right thing in promising his people only blood, sweat, and tears. He had learned to allow morale to slump after setbacks; it was easier to restore afterward.⁷ He proposed to copy Churchill's methods. He actually asked Backe if planned food-ration cuts could be brought forward.⁸ 'The German people,' he said, 'should get in tune with the war situation and not sustain false hopes.'⁹ Once he defined it as his classical mission in this war to become 'the architect of the German soul.'¹⁰

He would willingly have proclaimed total war, the mobilization of all available manpower from the home economy for the war effort, there and then. When his former press officer Moritz von Schirmeister returned from the eastern front in January 1942 he heard Goebbels expatiate several times during meals on the need for the government to implement total war.¹¹ The media were still showing peacetime-flavored pictures of lavish social functions even now.¹² Putting deeds before words, he replaced three hundred men of his own ministry with women.¹³

Hitler's riflemen had paid winter's cruel price. By late January 1942 they had suffered 1,856 amputations.¹⁴ Goebbels addressed them all in his first *Das Reich* article of the new year. 'It behooves us to remain tough and composed,' he wrote.¹⁵ Hitler, a stickler for style, disliked that word 'composed,' and decided on the strength of it that Goebbels should not

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 deliver the party's anniversary speech on January 30. 'I know how to preserve the golden mean between reason and rhetoric,' he explained over supper in the minister's absence. 'I'd not have expressed myself like that. In a situation like this, the soldier is not composed but resolute.¹⁶ When you've been through it yourself you get a feel for these things.'

Characteristically when Goebbels came for lunch the next day Hitler bit his tongue and said nothing of this. They talked of Britain's eclipse in the Far East. In three weeks the Führer expected the Japanese to overrun Singapore. 'Perhaps,' he mused to Dr Goebbels, 'there is a chance here to bring Britain, if not to her senses, at least to reconsider her position.' He had succeeded in stabilizing Germany's own eastern front. For three weeks he had worked round the clock, reviving the spirits of his demoralized generals in endless conferences and telephone arguments—he described these commanders unflatteringly as like inflatable dummies with slow punctures. Goebbels told Hitler that according to Major Martin many officers in the High Command had openly predicted that the Soviet armies would be on East Prussia's frontiers that spring. Hitler angrily told him to get a list of their names.¹⁷ Back in Berlin Goebbels directed the unfortunate major that it was now his duty to draw up this black list. 'There is only one sin,' he said, quoting Friedrich Nietzsche, 'and that is cowardice.'¹⁸ It was perhaps significant that he was now automatically extending his remit far beyond the portals of his own ministry. A day or two later Schirmeister's wife Emmi, invited by Magda to dinner, innocently told of an officer cousin who had plied her in East Prussia with dark rumors that the Russians were coming. Goebbels told her to name that officer too, saying, 'I guarantee he will be shot within twenty-four hours.'¹⁹

BEFORE leaving the Wolf's Lair on January 19 Dr Goebbels had also touched briefly on the Jewish problem. 'On this,' he noted, unable to hang any meat on the now threadbare phrases, 'the Führer holds without qualification to the existing and proper hard-line view.'²⁰

20 Behind closed doors the Final Solution, in all its heathen criminality, was already undergoing a deadly shift of emphasis. As Goebbels arrived back in Berlin on January 20 Heydrich was holding his first inter-ministerial conference on the topic at Wannsee, a suburb of Berlin.²¹ The ambitious, amoral S.S. Obergruppenführer had issued the original invitations back in November, including one to Goebbels' Staatssekretär Gutterer, but Gutterer had never received it and the propaganda ministry was one of several not represented at this conference.²² The conference was largely window-dressing anyway. Chaos was spreading in the eastern territories as more trainloads of Jewish evacuees arrived there. Hans Frank's Government-General was flatly refusing to accept any more—Frank had exclaimed irritably at one of his Cabinet meetings in Kraków that Berlin was telling them they'd got no use for the Jews either. 'Liquidate them yourselves!' was his retort.²³ Two more batches, of 1,037 and 1,000 Jews, had left Berlin for Riga on January 13 and 19; but the train

Scene
 Frank in a rage.

March 5, 1942

A FATE WHICH BEGGARS ALL DESCRIPTION 387

which left Berlin, also for Riga, on January 25, loaded with 1,051 Jews, was the last batch for two months.²⁴

Goebbels heard his Führer recall, in his speech of January 30, the sinister prophecy which he had made exactly three years before that this war would bring the 'destruction of Jewry.'²⁵ His own evil deportation project temporarily thwarted by the winter transportation crisis, Goebbels devised a string of regulations calculated to hound and harass the Jews as he had in 1938.²⁶ He ordered one Jew punished for using coffee rations given him by a non-Jew.²⁷ He forbade Jews to use public transport at all, apart from those still working in the munitions factories.²⁸ He prohibited Jews from ordering newspapers by mail, from buying them at kiosks, and from having them delivered.²⁹

After lunching with Hitler in February Goebbels dictated: 'The Führer once again expresses his ruthless resolve to make a clean sweep of the Jews out of Europe. One can't go getting all sentimental about it. The Jews have richly deserved the catastrophe they are suffering today. . . . We have to accelerate this process with a studied ruthlessness and we are thereby doing an invaluable service to a long-suffering mankind tormented for millennia by the Jews.' Hitler, he claimed, had ordered him to convert those who were still in two minds about this. 'The major prospects opened up by war are recognized by the Führer in all their significance.'

Fueling the raging fires of his own prejudices, Goebbels spent an evening watching The Dybbuk, a Polish Yiddish film. 'Its effect is so antisemitic,' he felt, 'that one can only marvel how little the Jews . . . realize what non-Jews find repellent. Watching this film,' he continued, 'one perceives once more that the Jewish race is the most dangerous on earth, and that one must display neither mercy nor softness toward it.'³⁰

It is important, reading entries like this, to recall that Goebbels' diary is not above criticism as a source. It was now dictated each morning to a private secretary, and typed out in triplicate by clerks. It is acceptable as evidence against Goebbels, but not necessarily against third parties. A distinction must be drawn therefore between what he admits putting to his Führer, and what he alleges the Führer put to him.

Hitler was even now less radical on the Jewish problem than Goebbels, Himmler, Heydrich, and Speer. He was prevaricating; according to Eichmann, he saw the real Final Solution in the Jewish colonization of Madagascar.³¹ But Goebbels was powered by the unflickering light of an unwavering, ineradicable antisemitism. Hearing of an outcry in London against Jewish spivs and black marketeers he gloated: 'The Jews are the same all the world over. You either have to slap a Yellow Star on them, or throw them into a concentration camp, or shoot them.'³² On March 5 he received a report from Heydrich about guerrilla warfare in the occupied east, and blamed this on the Jews too. 'It is therefore understandable,' he dictated to Otte, 'that many of them must pay with their lives for this. Anyway, in my view the more Jews who are liquidated the more

consolidated the situation in Europe will be after the war. Let there be no phony sentimentalism about it. The Jews are Europe's misfortune. They must somehow be eliminated otherwise we are in danger of being eliminated by them.³³

On the following day he took note of an extensive report prepared by Heydrich's office, probably on the Wannsee conference.³⁴ There were still eleven million Jews in Europe, he dictated, summarizing the document. 'For the time being they are to be concentrated in the east [until] later; possibly an island like Madagascar can be assigned to them after the war.' 'Undoubtedly there will be a multitude of personal tragedies,' he added firmly, 'But this is unavoidable. The situation now is ripe for a final settlement of the Jewish question.'³⁵ In a covering letter Heydrich invited Goebbels to a second conference, on March 6. Goebbels sent two of his senior staff.³⁶ Eichmann talked crudely at this meeting of 'forwarding' the Jews to the east, like so many head of cattle.³⁷ The ministry of justice handled the report on this new discussion like a hot potato.³⁸ The Reich Chancellery referred it all to Hitler.³⁹ Hitler wearily told Hans Lammers that he wanted the solution of the Jewish problem postponed until after the war was over—a ruling that remarkably few historians now seem disposed to quote.⁴⁰

By now the two-month railroad log-jam was over and another train was being loaded with Berlin Jews marked for deportation. What might be their fate? On March 27, the day before this trainload left Berlin, Goebbels dictated an extraordinary, deadpan but spine-chilling entry into his diary which confirmed that he at least was now in little doubt.

Beginning with Lublin the Jews are now being deported eastward from the Government-General. The procedure is pretty barbaric, and one that beggars description, and there's not much left of the Jews. Broadly speaking one can probably say that sixty percent of them will have to be liquidated [a word whose use he had of course banned], while only forty percent can be put to work.

'The former gauleiter of Vienna,' he continued, referring to S.S. Brigadeführer Odilo Globocnik, S.S. and police chief of the Lublin District, 'who is carrying out this operation, is doing so pretty discreetly and also using a procedure that is not too flagrant.'⁴¹ The Jews had had it coming to them for a long time, he added, and cited yet again Hitler's prophecy of 1939, and the need to eschew all mawkish sentimentality. 'It's a life-and-death struggle between the Aryan race and the Jewish bacillus,' he concluded, adopting Hitler's favorite analogy. 'Here too,' he dictated to his poker-faced stenographer, 'the Führer is the staunch champion and promoter of a radical solution.'⁴²

Nowhere do the diary's seventy-five thousand pages refer to an explicit order by Hitler for the murder of the Jews. (Perhaps this is not surprising, but for the sake of completeness it needs saying.) Goebbels instinctively fashioned every phrase of those diaries with both cunning and ambiguity. The documents clearly show Hitler as the uncompromising architect of

reference to the actor's suicide

46
47

March 1942

A FATE WHICH BEGGARS ALL DESCRIPTION 389

the callous plan to shunt all Europe's Jews out, failing Madagascar, to the east. The Polish ghettos emptied by this process would be replenished with Jews deported from the Reich. 'The Jews,' wrote Goebbels, 'have nothing to laugh about.'⁴³ They were having to pay dearly for the misdeeds of their brethren in Britain and America: Such was his rationale. On March 28 he stipulated that they were no longer to be listed in telephone directories.⁴⁴ Why should they be? They were disappearing from the face of occupied Europe.

Mar
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HE can deceive his diary, dictating touching entries calculated to portray their author to posterity as a caring family man; but he cannot deceive his own mother. Sometimes she is seen haunting the opulent halls and galleries at No. 20 Hermann-Göring Strasse laughing softly to herself as though she cannot believe that the frenetic demon controlling this evil empire is little Jupp, her youngest son, the waiflike cripple she nursed through infancy. She barely speaks to others, and when she does her thick Rhineland dialect comes as a shock to them.⁴⁵

Once again, pleading problems with her heart, Magda leaves him for a month-long cure in Dresden beginning on January 21.⁴⁶ Sometimes he goes over to see his favorite sister Maria, or to talk things over with his mother. They tell him home truths about public attitudes.⁴⁷ He takes his two eldest daughters and sleepy little Hellmut out to Lanke. It is his first visit there in three months, and the lovely Ursula Quandt stands in for Magda.⁴⁸ He lets the children play truant on the pretext that their younger sisters at Schwanenwerder have whooping cough. They spend happy hours sledding in the snow—the same snow which is shrouding Europe and wreaking havoc on his Jewish evacuation timetable.⁴⁹ On the last day of April he moves out to Lanke in a vain attempt to cure a bout of eczema, a chronic health problem.⁵⁰

Jani

One evening he is visited here by a ghost from the past, Anka Stalherm, now forty-six, editor of *Dame* and without even a trace of gray defiling her blonde hair. Her second husband Rudolf Oswald, fifteen years her junior, has just been killed on the eastern front. She mentions that there are still some (Jewish) Ullstein hold-outs left at her magazine's publisher, Deutscher Verlag. Goebbels promises to clear them out, but all the quivering, painful tendresse of their earlier relationship has faded and gone away.⁵¹

score

HE believed that the winter's crisis had now passed its lowest point.⁵² Morale had been depressed all winter by the epidemics of frostbite and typhus ravaging the armies in the east.⁵³ In North Africa Rommel recaptured Benghazi and lunged on toward Tobruk. Goebbels promoted him to a national hero, although the army discouraged all hero-worship of its commanders.⁵⁴

The British prime minister had no such inhibitions. In Churchill, Goebbels recognized that he had met his match. 'A clever speech,' he had written after one Churchill offering a year earlier.⁵⁵ After listening to

another speech by the prime minister in Birmingham he had enviously written, 'He plays on the tear glands, the old crook.' He scoffed at Churchill's clever evasions. 'Thus we sent to Greece a large part of our Army of the Nile,' he said, mimicked the prime minister, 'to meet our obligations. It transpired by chance that the formations to hand all came from New Zealand and Australia...' 'It's always "chance" that finds the British bringing up the rear,' he mocked, spelling out propaganda lines to his staff. 'Chance that they are always on the retreat. By chance they have no share in the bloody casualties. By chance it is the French, the Belgians, and the Dutch who have to bear the brunt of our western offensive. By chance the Norwegians have to cover the British as they flee Norway. And by chance it is the troops of the empire who, since there are no others left, have to do the job now.'⁵⁶ Having said all that, however, he warned against denigrating the British soldier; the British might let others bear the brunt of the fighting, but when cornered they fought like wildcats.⁵⁷

He became obsessed with Churchill. In *Das Reich* he referred to him as 'that old whisky soak' but admitted, 'A chronic whisky drinker is more welcome as Britain's prime minister than a teetotaler.'⁵⁸ He and Hitler devoured the fond if scurrilous book in which Churchill's private secretary described his drinking habits and his custom of dictating to her in pink silk underwear or even in his bath.⁵⁹ With a sure understanding of the public appetite, Goebbels warned his journalists to go easy on these stories and to concentrate more on the prime minister's dysfunctional family circumstances, his dilettante conduct of the war, and his monstrous lies.⁶⁰

One conclusion was inescapable: Though Churchill might be a 'conceited ape,' they had no choice but to tackle this 'lying old swine;' he was 'a bulldog who may yet give us a run for our money.'⁶¹ 'He's going to be a tough nut for us to crack,' he added a few days later. 'Without him, the war would have been over long ago. But *with* him, there's going to be some hard fighting ahead.'⁶² Studying Churchill's book of pre-war speeches, *Step by Step*, he decided that this implacable foe combined a rare amalgam of heroism and animal cunning. 'If he had come to power in 1933,' he frankly assessed, 'we wouldn't be where we are today.'⁶³ Many times he discussed Churchill with his Führer. 'He will end by reducing the empire to ruin,' predicted Hitler.⁶⁴ He said that all his pre-war English visitors, including Neville Chamberlain, had described Churchill as a fool. 'The Führer naturally regrets very much the knocks that the White man is taking in the Far East,' recorded the propaganda minister. 'But these are no fault of ours.'⁶⁵

Those were dramatic days. As Hitler met him for lunch on February 13 three of the mightiest Nazi warships were plowing in broad daylight eastward through the narrow, wintry straits of Dover under Churchill's very nose; it was one of the most audacious naval operations ever staged. At the same time the Japanese were bearing down on Singapore. Goebbels mocked that the same British who had been unwilling to allow Danzig

1942

to return to Germany now seemed happy to give up Singapore.⁶⁶ He told his editors to feign regret—and to remind the British that it was they who had wanted this war.⁶⁷ As Singapore raised the white flag, Goebbels added that they should remind readers of the coruscating rebukes that Churchill had heaped upon his Belgian, Dutch, and French allies for surrendering in 1940.⁶⁸

His 1942 birthday address to Hitler displayed a worshipfulness of an almost religious fervor. It revived the image of the 'lonely Führer,' to which he added a soupçon of the 'suffering Führer' and a Christ who suffered only for the Germans.⁶⁹ Nowhere did the diary reflect this more clearly than after a visit to Hitler's HQ in March. 'The Führer, thank God,' he routinely began, 'appears to be in good health.' But then, after more in this gushing vein, he dictated: 'Actually that is not the case. In our intimate talk he told me that recently he has not been very well. From time to time he has had to fight off severe attacks of giddiness.' And finally that day, forty pages later, 'The Führer makes an unnerving impression on me this time. I have never seen him so grim as now. I tell him that I, too, am not at all in the best of health. We continued this discussion very intimately, man to man.'⁷⁰ He said that Hitler had urged him to visit again soon, but over five weeks would pass before the one malade-imaginaire again set eyes on the other.

Using guarded language, Dr Goebbels had put in a word for his imprisoned colleague Karl Bömer. Hitler agreed to Bömer's immediate release and posting to a punishment battalion. Haggard from his ten months in jail, the former department head was brought into the ministry building a few days later; Goebbels gave him money and a food package, and sent him off on four weeks' leave in Bavaria before his posting to the front.⁷¹ Bömer was wounded in action at Kharkov a few weeks later and died in hospital at Kraków. Goebbels and Dietrich jointly signed a defiantly prominent obituary in the party's gazette.⁷²

To his Italian colleagues Goebbels expressed only a qualified optimism about the future. He would personally be content if they reached the Caucasus.⁷³ Hitler had told him that he was setting himself clear but limited objectives for the coming offensives—Leningrad, Moscow, and the Caucasus. In October, he promised, he would call a halt for the winter and perhaps even for good. He did not stint his praise for the Soviet leadership. 'Stalin's brutal hand saved the Russian front,' Goebbels heard Hitler say. 'We shall have to adopt similar methods.'⁷⁴

THE next day, March 20, Gutterer brought to him an extraordinary story. He had just lunched at the Kaiserhof with Professor Otto Hahn, who had discovered nuclear fission in 1938; Hahn hinted at the work that he and Professor Werner Heisenberg were doing on the atomic bomb. 'If we had such a weapon,' Hahn said, 'everybody else would throw in the towel right away!' Gutterer brought him straight round to Goebbels at No. 20 Hermann-Göring Strasse. Goebbels asked how long it would take to build such a weapon. Hahn spoke of the autumn of 1945, but added

that he was hampered since Rust, the minister of education, had sacked his best physicist Lisa Meitner (she was Jewish); Goebbels loathed Rust, and exploded in fury; he asked if Meitner could be retrieved—he would guarantee that she would be under Hitler's personal protection and be given a fine estate if they developed the bomb. (She was already in England however.)⁷⁵ Quoting Otto Hahn, Goebbels told his diary that a tiny device would yield such immense destructive power that 'one is forced to view with dread the shape of this war, and indeed of all future wars, if it drags on much longer.' It was vital, he noted, to keep the German lead in this field.⁷⁶

After a meeting with the atomic scientists in June Speer reported to Hitler, though in terms of little enthusiasm, and the small German lead was lost.⁷⁷

CONVENTIONAL bombing already seemed destructive enough. On Saturday March 28 Churchill's bombers set medieval Lübeck on fire. Gauleiter Kaufmann told Goebbels that it was unlike any raid that had gone before. When Hitler phoned, raging that he had been unable to raise the ministry of the interior by telephone at all, Goebbels asked for full powers to arrange emergency food and clothing for the city.⁷⁸ He discovered that most of his fellow ministers went missing on Friday evenings. The war department not only shut down every weekend but took off Wednesday afternoons too, as though it were still peacetime.

A few hours before the Lübeck raid, the Jewish exodus from Berlin had resumed after a two-month hiatus.⁷⁹ A train left Berlin that day, March 28, 1942, for Travniki with 974 Jews. Goebbels now ordered a comprehensive film record made.⁸⁰ 'About a thousand a week are now being shipped out to the east,' he dictated. 'The suicide rate among these Jewish evacuees is extremely high,' he added without emotion. 'It's no skin off my nose. The Jews have had it coming to them. . . . They ignored our warnings, and now they're paying for it.'⁸¹ Another train left on April 2 with 654 Berlin Jews, and a third with sixty-five, also bound for Travniki, on April 14. There was then another halt. It would not be easy to get rid of the rest, some forty thousand, because under the current regulations only complete families could be deported: if even one member was exempt, so was the whole family.⁸² Controversy was rife about what to do with the half-Jews—sterilize them, or deport with all that that implied? 'There is no doubt,' Goebbels conceded, 'that these do pose a serious obstacle to the radical solution of the Jewish problem.'⁸³

The partisan war provided both camouflage and rationale for the massacres. Among the thousands of victims of the partisan fighters was Tonak, Goebbels' trusty former chauffeur. He was gunned down and buried in swamplands west of R'zhev.⁸⁴ 'The Jews get short shrift in all the occupied territories,' Goebbels dictated after reading the latest S.D. report on the partisan war. 'Tens of thousands are being wiped out.' He never tired of repeating Hitler's sinister 1939 prophecy, and did so again.⁸⁵ From Moscow came reports on a Jewish congress uttering bloodthirsty

threats of retribution once Hitler was overthrown. 'But that cannot be,' dictated Goebbels. 'That must not be, and that shall not be.'⁸⁶

Fears for his own safety were never far from his mind. He saw every living Jew as a potential assassin. Nine-tenths of the assassinations in Paris were being committed by Jews, which was, he conceded, hardly surprising under the circumstances. 'It would be best either to deport the remaining yids from Paris, or to liquidate the lot.'⁸⁷ He was planning an elaborate public trial of Herschel Grynszpan, who had fallen into Nazi hands in 1940, but the assassin's crafty lawyers had now floated the theory that he and his victim Rath had been homosexual lovers.⁸⁸ This was potential dynamite for the enemy propaganda. Before Goebbels could stop it, the minister of justice included this infamous allegation in the court papers and, worse, ruled that the trial should allow public discussion of the deportation of the Jews—a development which Goebbels found 'incredibly inept.'⁸⁹ Thus the Grynszpan affair turned to ashes in his hands. Leopold Gutterer reviewed the dossier and advised Goebbels to drop the prosecution entirely.⁹⁰

Grynszpan's trial was put on ice; indeed, he survived the war. Gutterer was told he had sat at the back of a Hamburg court-room in the fifties when he himself was on trial. This was one of the ultimate ironies of the Final Solution which the young Jew's pistol shots in 1938 had helped to unleash.

April 1942

45: At any Price

TOURING Austria's principal cities in 1942 to celebrate the fourth anniversary of the Anschluss Goebbels launched a new slogan, 'Victory at any price.'¹ A quarter of a million troops had already died in Barbarossa. British air raids and reduced food rations were eroding public morale.² Goebbels ordered propaganda onslaughts on the enemies within: He listed black marketeering, excessive paperwork, and—an eternal quest—the surliness of public servants like waiters, transport workers, and post office clerks.³ Oblivious of the double standards involved, he persuaded Hitler and Bormann to crack down on the sybaritic lifestyle of top Nazis.⁴ He then privately authorized the party's acquisition and total renovation of a château in his native Rheydt for his exclusive use.⁵ He generously started public collections of textiles and mosquito nets for the eastern front.⁶ To the former he contributed a suit, Magda her riding breeches—Hanke had now galloped out of her life—and Harald his Hitler Youth uniform; they also gave raincoats, trench-coats, and gabardine coats, as well as two silk dresses, a long evening dress, and a nurse's cloak.⁷

Hitler had repeatedly ordered the church problem postponed, like the Jewish problem, until the war was over. Disregarding him, the party's 'radicalinskis,' as Goebbels called them, confiscated several church buildings in Berlin.⁸ Hitler reassured him that once this war was over he too would give no quarter to the clergy who were acting in such a 'vile' way while Germany's soldiers were fighting for their lives. The moment his hands were free he would settle this mutinous clergy's hash, once and for all. Goebbels looked forward to this new battle as one of the great ideological conflicts of all time.⁹

Death and destruction continued to come from the heavens over Germany. Goebbels had believed that the Lübeck raid was just a fluke, but he was mistaken. After a puny raid on Cologne led him to remark that that was all the British were now capable of, on April 23 they began a series of four fire raids on Rostock.¹⁰ It seemed that shutting down their evening broadcast had not hampered the British navigators at all. Even so Goebbels was unwilling to resume broadcasts, fearing that Göring would make him a scapegoat for the next catastrophe.¹¹ Hitler told him that he was ordering reprisal raids against historic British towns like Bath. Goebbels hoped for propaganda profit from wiping out these 'cultural

April 23

1942

AT ANY PRICE 395

centers, watering holes, and middle-class towns,' or as he called it, 'Answering terror with terror.'¹²

Sensing that these fire raids had inclined Hitler toward radical solutions, Goebbels felt it a propitious moment to mention the Berlin Jews again. Hitler reiterated his stand-point. 'He wants to force the Jews right out of Europe,' dictated Goebbels. 'The Jews have inflicted such suffering on our continent that the harshest punishment . . . is still too mild.'¹³

FOR most of May 1942 he lingered out at Lanke fighting his eczema. Leopold Gutterer chaired the ministerial conferences in his absence. Returning with his affliction still uncured he heard that unknown assassins had maimed Heydrich in Prague. This episode triggered further antisemitic impulses in Goebbels, who was already concerned for his own security (he had years before remarked to journalists that if there was one word they had to shun as the Devil shunned Holy Water it was surely 'assassination'). It cheered him when his old comrade Kurt Daluge, standing in for the mortally wounded Heydrich in Prague, had a thousand intellectuals shot. 'Assassinations can set a bad example if we don't act ruthlessly against them,' noted Goebbels, and he took harsh action against the remaining Jews in Berlin, ordering the arrest of five hundred and notifying their community that he would have one hundred shot for every Jewish act of sabotage or murder, though his authority to do this seems obscure.¹⁴ 'I have no desire,' he explained in his diary, 'to have a bullet pumped into my belly by some twenty-two-year-old yid from the east. Give me ten Jews in a concentration camp, or under the sod, to one at large any day.'¹⁵

The fate awaiting the deportees was evidently swift and deadly. Only nine days after one round-up, that on May 27, the Berlin Gestapo was already writing to the tax authorities attaching a list of 'those who have since died' and the assets they had declared.¹⁶ Lunching with Hitler on May 29 Goebbels persuaded him to instruct Speer, now munitions minister, to have Jewish munitions workers replaced by foreigners. That would remove the exemption from deportation on hundreds of Jewish families. Implying that he was well aware of the ultimate fate of the evacuees Goebbels dictated that he saw a major danger in having forty thousand Jews 'with nothing more to lose' running loose in the Reich capital. He incidentally also advised Hitler to liquidate Berlin's prison population while he could. 'We have lost so many idealists in this war,' echoed Goebbels, thinking of Tonak, 'that we have to exact a like measure from the negative criminal fraternity.'¹⁷ Hitler agreed with him that it would be a mistake to evacuate Jews to Siberia—the spartan life there would turn them back into a virulent breed. 'That's why he would prefer them to be settled in Central Africa,' recorded Goebbels. 'There they'll be living in a climate which definitely won't make them tough and resilient.' 'At any rate,' he concluded, 'it's the Führer's aim to rid western Europe of the Jews entirely.'¹⁸

Too many Jews were already hearing rumors from the B.B.C. and other

May 1942

sources about the fate awaiting them. Goebbels learned in January 1942 that Germany's radio-monitoring agencies, and particularly the foreign ministry's Seehaus service were distributing their defeatist digests throughout official Berlin; 180 copies were going to Ribbentrop's ministry alone.¹⁹ Hitler gave him immediate powers to prune the lists of recipients. Soon afterward he was granted high-level access to the top-secret signals-intelligence and intercept digests prepared by Göring's Forschungsamt.²⁰ Goebbels expressed an interest only in those 'brown pages' bearing upon foreign policy; although the Reichsmarschall usually limited distribution of these intercepts on a strictly need-to-know basis, he humored this curiosity and Goebbels' liaison officer Dr Severitt brought, in his locked dispatch box, sheaves of reports such as on Molotov's secret deals with the British government in May.²¹

STALIN was fighting with his back to the wall; he needed the Allies. The pendulum was swinging back in Hitler's favor. The Germans were fighting a gigantic tank battle at Kharkov. The Kerch peninsula was back in their hands. They sank a million tons of Allied shipping during May 1942, and in the following month, Hitler told Goebbels on May 22, they would commission one and a half times as many new submarines as were currently at sea. Rommel took Tobruk. When Hitler came to Berlin on May 28 to speak at the Sport Palace, he told Goebbels that he now intended to cut off the Caucasus, thus crushing the Soviet Adam's apple.²²

Over Germany, an unnatural calm prevailed at night. Where were Churchill's bombers? Goebbels suggested to his department heads that the British were bluffing to forestall Stalin's demands for a second front.²³ Hitler attributed the lull to Britain's dismay at his reprisal raids. The lull ended late on Saturday May 30, 1942. The British bombers returned in unprecedented force, attacking Cologne. Goebbels was at first blissfully unaware and Hitler's adjutant failed to track him down—or any other minister; Hitler reached Gutterer through the ministry switchboard and told him to start relief operations. Suspecting that Goebbels was illicitly engaged, Gutterer phoned Hermann-Göring Strasse and left a discreet message for him to call him urgently 'whenever he got back.' After directing Hermann Schäfer, their electrical wizard, to take the Reich Motor Convoy (Reichsautozug) from Munich to Cologne with its powerful mobile generators, kitchens, bakeries, and mobile hospital, Gutterer summoned a ten A.M. conference with the other ministries in Goebbels' appropriately named Pompeii Room.²⁴

A disaster had hit Cologne. The gauleiter was calling it the heaviest raid ever. Churchill was talking of a 'thousand-bomber' raid, the German air staff of seventy bombers (of which they claimed to have shot down forty); while Goebbels assumed that Churchill was exaggerating a bit, he felt that seventy was far too low.²⁵ Massive retaliation was out of the question, as the Luftwaffe had its main weight on the eastern front. Hitler struck at Canterbury, but had only seventy bombers for the purpose. An unseemly propaganda war developed. The American press spoke of an

1942

earthquake hitting Cologne, and inflated the casualties—they claimed sixty thousand dead (the real figure was 474).²⁶ Significantly changing his tactics, Goebbels authorized live radio interviews with survivors like those broadcast by the B.B.C. at the height of the Nazi blitz.²⁷

His shortwave broadcasts to North American linked these 'terror raids' to the Jewish problem, accusing Roosevelt's 'propaganda kikes' of 'yiddling' while Cologne burned.²⁸ He did not underestimate the Americans' propaganda; he particularly feared their seductive theme that the Allies were fighting the Nazis, and not the German people. If the British had struck this chord, he admitted to his staff, it could have been fatal.²⁹ His best hope was to drive a wedge between London and Washington, as once he had done between London and Paris.³⁰ In broadcasts to American audiences he portrayed the British as bunglers who existed only at Stalin's caprice; then he told the British to beware the rapacious, empire-stealing Americans. He depicted the United States as disaster-prone and 'too weak' to be of real assistance.³¹ These unsophisticated messages worked. 'One only has to read the [American] newspapers,' Roosevelt was informed, 'or ride in a bus or visit his [sic] club, bar, or coffee shop.'³² Goebbels put it about that their ethnic cousins, the German-Americans in the United States, were being forced to wear yellow armbands: and thus the vicious circle was completed.³³ He coined the phrase Roosevelt's War, and began putting it about that the president was mentally ill, like Woodrow Wilson before him.³⁴

He now controlled a Radio Free America ostensibly run by 'independent Americans' in Europe. Early in July 1942 Goebbels closed down four of the other ten black transmitters; among those remaining on the air were the New British Broadcasting Station (starring William Joyce), a Voice of Free Arabs, and the Russian-language station directed by ex-communist Albrecht. Goebbels had also set up a Voice of Free India as a vehicle for the Indian nationalist Subhas Chandra Bose, a former mayor of Calcutta whom he interviewed in July.³⁵ The bamboo rod, he ordered, must become a symbol of British rule in India 'like the police truncheon in the *System* era [i.e. the Weimar Republic] in Germany.'³⁶

As Churchill traveled to Washington Goebbels asked his editors to comment on the prime minister's habit of fleeing abroad each time things went wrong. 'Tobruk,' he wrote, as Rommel captured the strategic North African port, 'is our revenge for Cologne.' While Britain's drunken dilettante was squandering his bombers on civilian targets, she was losing vital battles elsewhere through lack of air power. 'Churchill is victorious in Parliament,' he mocked after the British prime minister survived another vote of confidence in July 1942: 'But Germany wins the wars.'³⁷

This did not however include the guerrilla war. When Heydrich died of his injuries, the Nazis liquidated the Czech village which they alleged had harbored his assassins.³⁸ The Czechs as a whole had condemned the murder, and when Gauleiter Baldur von Schirach talked loosely of ridding Vienna of its Czech minority Bormann reminded all the gauleiters, including Goebbels, that Hitler had forbidden any such measures.³⁹

There were other gaffes. In France S.S. Brigadeführer Carl Oberg announced plans to execute all the male kinsfolk of assassins: their women would be sent to hard labor, and their children to orphanages. Goebbels said that Oberg's proposals violated every propaganda principle. The inclusion of women and children was a gift to the enemy, he said; and hostages should always be taken from the same band of the political spectrum as the culprits.⁴⁰

He attributed the ominous growth of partisan warfare in Russia to the absence of any coherent *Ostpolitik*.⁴¹ Earlier in 1942 he had issued guidelines on how to win over all the occupied populations.⁴² Russian prisoners were unanimous under Nazi interrogation that they 'preferred to die on their feet than to live on their knees'—a brilliant slogan coined by Stalin himself.⁴³ To Hitler Goebbels hinted that they should set up puppet governments in the Ukraine and Baltic states.⁴⁴ 'You can't rule Russia from Berlin,' he said, criticizing Rosenberg.⁴⁵ He felt the latter was impractical, naïve, and hopeless at organization.⁴⁶ He drafted a decree guaranteeing religious freedom to the Russians, and determined to secure Hitler's approval the next time they met.⁴⁷ He felt sure that Hitler was being kept in the dark about the partisan war. From all quarters he was urged to take it up with him.⁴⁸ He sent Walter Tiessler to point out to Rosenberg once again that their enemy was bolshevism, not Russia as such. Rosenberg ducked the issue, and the infighting went on.⁴⁹

Another problem was that German visitors to Russia, like the archaeologists that Rosenberg had recently sent, were finding things there less primitive than Goebbels had painted.⁵⁰ The Germans were learning that the Russians too were capable of fighting and dying for a cause. Russian commanders outnumbered in the fighting for Sevastopol had chosen to blow up their entire position rather than surrender. Knowing the German weakness for heroic idols, Goebbels suppressed all such reports. 'National Socialism,' he lectured to his staff, 'teaches that bolshevism is not an ideology, but the effluence of sub-human, criminal, and Jewish instincts.' He could never forget that five million former communist voters lived in their midst: The disease was only in remission; it had not been extinguished. The sewer rat, he said, reverting to customary Nazi imagery, would always prove more hardy than the domestic pet. Thus their reporting must distinguish between the heroism of the German soldier and the animal survival-instinct of the Russians.⁵¹ He wrote an essay on this problem for *Das Reich* and circulated it throughout the party. 'The superior race will triumph over the inferior one,' he asserted, 'no matter what infernal means the latter may use to escape its personal fate.'⁵²

BRITAIN'S fortunes were now at their lowest ebb. As Rommel's exhausted Axis armies dug in at El Alamein, Goebbels' propaganda blared promises of independence to the Egyptians. On the high seas Hitler's submarines had sunk seven hundred thousand tons of shipping during June. In the first days of July his submarines and bombers in the Arctic mauled the

1942

Russia-bound Anglo-American convoy PQ.17 so badly that the next convoy-run was abandoned.

Stalin, speculated Goebbels, must be furious about Churchill's failure. Perhaps he would one day be willing to come to terms. Germany would certainly not reject any overtures.⁵³ From his close study of Soviet newsreels he concluded that Stalin was a quiet, dogged type; head and shoulders above the pigmies of the western democracies. 'That man has style,' he said.⁵⁴ Moscow's clamor for a Second Front—a British invasion of the Continent—grew throughout July.⁵⁵ On the twenty-third Goebbels warned his staff that given Churchill's 'unstable' character an invasion in the west was quite probable.⁵⁶ German propaganda had, he pointed out, no interest in provoking such an event; on the contrary, they must do all they could to help Churchill represent his air raids as a viable substitute for a Second Front.⁵⁷ He dealt with such an invasion in a *Reich* article on August 2, entitled 'Don't even try it.' Its sardonic tone almost violated his own guidelines: 'We extend to the British a hearty invitation to come over,' he taunted. 'We hope they'll bring a few Americans along too. . . .'⁵⁸

Churchill hurried to Moscow. Goebbels ordered the Nazi media to dwell on every detail of the prime minister's humiliation—for example, that Stalin did not even bother to meet him at the airport.⁵⁹

Hitler had meanwhile shifted his summer HQ to Vinnitsa in the Ukraine. In mid-August he asked Goebbels to fly down to discuss the domestic situation 'and foreign policy,' as the minister noted. 'He also intends to give me special powers to take over civil defense.'⁶⁰ He had spent several days touring the blitzed cities.⁶¹ As his plane landed at Vinnitsa on August 19 events in France were taking a dramatic turn. Two brigades of Canadian troops were storming the beaches on either side of Dieppe. By midday the landing force had been all but wiped out.⁶² Hitler told Goebbels the next day what had happened. A German Channel convoy had stumbled on the invasion force. 'Thus,' dictated Goebbels in his diary, 'we had the first report that something was afoot out there in the murk and fog as early as 4:28 A.M.' A German submarine chaser had rammed one landing craft, a second German warship had opened fire on the British motor torpedo-boats. After an exchange of fire at point-blank range which left eleven Germans dead and ten missing, the British raid developed into a debacle. The raiding force lost one destroyer, thirty-three landing craft, 106 planes, and 4,350 men (including 1,179 dead). London claimed that the raid was merely an 'exercise with live ammunition.' Goebbels dismissed this: 'Obviously the British planned to execute a major operation here,' he wrote. 'At very least they tried to bring about a Second Front . . . thereby complying with Stalin's orders. There can be no doubt about that.' Not even Churchill, he argued, would have sacrificed all those planes, destroyers, and troop transports, not to mention three thousand dead and missing men, for a mere exercise.⁶³ 'All of a sudden,' he scoffed the next day, 'the British are declaring that everything went just the way it was planned. From the fact that it was all over in nine hours they are now implying

that it was in fact only *planned* to last nine hours.⁶⁴ He noted with glee that Churchill had ordered a strict clamp-down on quoting the American newspaper reports on the fiasco. 'The reality is,' he commented, 'that he is the prisoner of the Kremlin. He can no longer conform to the dictates of common sense. He has to act at the Soviet behest.'⁶⁵

In glorious sunshine he left Hitler's HQ and drove back to the airfield, past rolling cornfields lush with the new Ukrainian harvest. If only they could transport it all back home, he sighed. The previous day's *Völkischer Beobachter* had carried a foolish article by Erich Koch, the local dictator, boasting of the agricultural riches now flowing to the Reich. As soon as he got back to his ministry, Goebbels warned against propagating such false illusions.⁶⁶

Goebbels had now been at war for three years. His public work mainly was involving Goebbels and he desired an article in 'The point of war', covering the events since 1939 from a left-wing point of view. Goebbels had been becoming more and more, particularly in speaking, 'less and of Hitler'. The most serious mistake, but within the first weeks of the 20th November, Goebbels had been told to stop the war, but he had not done so. He had been told to stop the war, but he had not done so. He had been told to stop the war, but he had not done so.

He had recently found a slogan to encourage the fighting against the 'enemies' of 'Hitler' to describe their actions and words. He had found it for anybody other than Hitler. He had found it for Hitler's enemies, but not for the war and not for the war. He had found it for Hitler's enemies, but not for the war and not for the war. He had found it for Hitler's enemies, but not for the war and not for the war.

The Russian winter's last was a struggle to the last. The winter's last was a struggle to the last. The winter's last was a struggle to the last. The winter's last was a struggle to the last. The winter's last was a struggle to the last. The winter's last was a struggle to the last.

An Soviet leader at Stalingrad refused to let the German army advance to the city's center. He had to let the German army advance to the city's center. He had to let the German army advance to the city's center. He had to let the German army advance to the city's center. He had to let the German army advance to the city's center.

1942

46: The Road to Stalingrad

GERMANY had now been at war for three years. Her public's brittle morale was troubling Goebbels and he drafted an article on 'The point of war,' reviewing the events since 1939 from a lofty ideological plane.¹ British leaflets were becoming more insidious, particularly one appealing, 'Get rid of Hitler!'² The message seemed unthinkable, but within the four walls of No. 20 Hermann-Göring Strasse even Goebbels began to express reservations about some of Hitler's decisions. Once he stepped out through the padded double-doors and into his morning ministerial conference, however, he radiated unswerving loyalty to his Führer.³

He had recently issued a circular to journalists discouraging inflated terms like 'unique' or 'historic' to describe their victories, and words like 'warlord' for anybody other than Hitler.⁴ Morale improved as Hitler's armies fanned out to the south and east across the shimmering, dusty Russian steppe, and Goebbels methodically warned the media against overweening optimism.⁵ They captured the oil cities of Maykop and Kraznodar; the Russian population rose against them under the influence of Moscow's propaganda and, as the High Command chided Goebbels, with no visible effect from his. Hitler repeatedly warned him to damp down any spreading optimism.⁶ He ordered General Friedrich Paulus to advance with the Sixth Army on Stalingrad, a city of two million souls dominating the Volga waterway.

The Russian summer's heat was as savage as the late winter's cold. The temperature soared to near 50°C. On August 8 Goebbels dictated: 'The battle of Stalingrad has begun.' As Marshal Timoshenko withdrew before Hitler's tank onslaught, Stalin ordered him to stand and fight. Goebbels compared this harshly worded order approvingly with Hitler's order of December 1941. 'You can see,' he dictated, warming once more to the Soviet leader, 'that in Stalin we are dealing with a man of caliber.'⁷

As Soviet resistance at Stalingrad stiffened, so did Goebbels' instinctive reluctance to mention the city's name. He had not forgotten Otto Dietrich's blunder of October 1941. From late in August onward he repeatedly embargoed all reference to the battle. Nobody could say how long it would last. But already Stalingrad was on every tongue, both friend and foe.⁸

321
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FOR a week he vanished from Germany, visiting Venice again for the biennial film festival.

Before leaving he wrote for *Das Reich* an article entitled 'Don't be so righteous,' a critique of the Germans' pedantic sense of justice and over-objectivity. 'We're so frightened of doing an injustice to somebody,' he wrote, 'that when in doubt we prefer that the injustice be done to ourselves. ... Hating is something we Germans still have to learn.' Too much objectivity, he concluded, would be the death of them.¹⁰ He repeated this attack in a secret address delivered to about sixty senior Berlin journalists in the ministry's Throne Room on September 23. He warned against harboring any illusions about victory. They must not underestimate their enemy. 'The German public is not as hardy as the British,' he pointed out. Britain had yet to lose a single war. 'The German public,' he repeated, 'suffers from a craving for righteousness and from a craze for objectivity. It keeps looking for the laudable in our enemies.' Their chronic love-affair with Churchill was just one example.^{10*} If he were English, he said, he would have kept repeating ever since 1939 that they were fighting Hitler, and not the Germans; he would also have hammered home *ad nauseam* the eight points of the Atlantic Charter. He warned them that their biggest problem in coming months would be the resumption of the British air raids. Single-line references to enemy air activity in the High Command communiqués would no longer suffice. He set up propaganda companies with no other task than to dramatize the coming blitz and the heroism of the people.¹¹

IN this secret speech to Berlin's top journalists, Goebbels was astonishingly frank about the fate of Berlin's Jews. Justifying the reporting restrictions imposed, he explained that every ill-considered sentence was liable to be reported abroad by the Jews. 'This conduct of the Jews is understandable enough,' he added, according to the transcript. 'In Berlin there are still forty-eight thousand of them.'¹² They know with deadly certainty that in the course of this war they will be deported to the east and left to their murderous fate. They can already sense the inexorable tread of physical annihilation and therefore, so long as they live, they inflict damage on the Reich whenever they can.'¹³

Small wonder that the world's Jews mobilized against Nazi Germany. In London, rabbis rallied to the slogan, 'England awake!' Goebbels derided this as a plagiarism of the Nazis' own rallying-call.¹⁴ In Jerusalem, Jews at the Wailing Wall placed an ancient curse on him. 'I have yet to observe any untoward effects,' he noted.¹⁵

His humor was ill-chosen. The deportations from Berlin had resumed. To silence public disquiet Goebbels ordered the bourgeois press to feature reports on hostile Jewish activities abroad.¹⁶ Trainloads of elderly Jews had begun leaving Berlin in June for Theresienstadt, the model camp for

* The Germans cheered Churchill when he drove through the ruins of Berlin in 1945, and the city of Aachen later awarded him the Charlemagne prize.

'old folks.' On July 11 the first trainload bound for Auschwitz left Berlin with 210 Jews aboard.¹⁷ In mid-August Berlin packed off 1,004 more Jews to Riga, followed by 790 on September 5; on the twenty-sixth 811 would be shipped to Reval. That day he noted that all Jews were to be excluded from fats and meat rations, except those still working in the munitions industry who would receive *only* the heavy-labor supplements.¹⁸ (The actual regulations were even more pitiless than his diary suggested: Meat *and* bread rations were canceled for all Jews other than those married to non-Jews or wounded in World War One; further, no Jews were to receive milk except infants, an interesting detail; any food packets received from abroad were to be deducted from Jews' ration cards; gifts of tea and coffee were to be confiscated and distributed to field hospitals.)¹⁹

Seventeen thousand Jews working in industry were still exempt from deportation. According to Goebbels' diary, Hitler agreed with his venomous comments on how their intellectuals and economists were everywhere discovering 'indispensable' Jewish skilled workers who just had to be spared.²⁰ In Goebbels' view, since they now had 240,000 foreign workers in Berlin it should not be too hard to replace the exempt Jews too.²¹ Two more trainloads of Jews left Berlin in October carrying 963 Jews to Riga and 791 more vaguely—and with sinister connotations—simply to 'the east.'

Despite all this the level hardly seemed to decline. He found out that many of Berlin's judges were half-Jews transferred from other cities in the belief that they would stand out less in Berlin. 'Berlin is not a garbage tip,' he exclaimed.²² In a letter to the new minister of justice Otto Thierack he proposed simply declaring all Jews 'unconditionally disposable'—the word he used, *ausrottbar*, also has ugly connotations—and commended to him 'the concept of annihilation through work.'²³ Thierack however was unexpectedly unsympathetic. Some, he pointed out, were half-Jews whose sons had already died in this war. 'So long as the Führer won't allow us to address the broader issue of those with Jewish blood or in-laws,' Thierack said, 'we can't carry out an *Aktion* confined to the legal system.'²⁴ At a meeting chaired by Eichmann that month the civil servants became bogged down in bureaucratic minutiae.²⁵ Frustrated, Goebbels said that he was sure that Berlin's Jews were helping the British bomber crews to find their targets (they weren't). He set himself a new target—to rid Berlin of its remaining Jews by March 1943.²⁶

Ugly rumors were already circulating abroad, fueled by British propaganda. The *Daily Telegraph* quoted Polish claims that seven thousand of Warsaw's Jews were being killed each day, often in what it called 'gas chambers;' one of Goebbels' worried civil servants telexed a request for information to Hans Frank's press office in Kraków and to the propaganda field office in Warsaw. The reassuring reply spoke of the Jews being used to construct defenses and roads. Be that as it may, in Goebbels' files the original press report, which had merely summarized the British

newspaper item, was rubber-stamped *Geheime Reichssache*, top state secret.²⁷

How much did Goebbels know? In his surviving files there is plenty that implies a broad general knowledge of the atrocities. Reporting back to him on November 11, his legal expert Dr Hans Schmidt-Leonhardt, whom he had sent to inspect conditions in Hans Frank's Polish dominions, noted that the Warsaw police had deemed it too dangerous to visit the ghetto there; in the Kraków ghetto he had found all the Jews put to work; in Lublin the ghetto had already been cleared away, and there were now bloody disturbances. 'As a *Geheime Reichssache*,' dictated the lawyer, 'Frank related to us the following characteristic recent instance:—' But whatever it was we cannot know, as Goebbels' shocked staff cut off the rest of the page that is filed in his ministry's records.²⁸

In February 1943 Dr Fritz Prause, a senior staff member, briefed Goebbels on the continued terrorist incidents resulting from their occupation policies—the Germans had begun rounding up Poles in cinemas and churches for slave labor. A poster appealing to 'Poles of German origin' had generated speculation about the likely fate of the rest. 'The rumor is spreading,' Prause reported, 'that the same fate now awaits the Poles as has been meted out to the Jews, and there is not a Pole in the Government-General who does not know precisely what has been done to them.' 'One thing is certain,' recommended Dr Prause: 'That the current derogatory slogan "Pole equals Jew" is no longer viable for the Government-General, particularly since the above-mentioned rumors dwell heavily on what is known to have become of the Jews.'²⁹

The wave of terrorist attacks continued. In the first quarter of 1943 forty-four Germans were assassinated in Warsaw. In April 1943 a local propaganda official reported to Goebbels that the 'resettlement' operations in Lublin—Nazi officialese for something clearly far worse—had left non-Jewish Poles with the definite impression that after the Jews their turn would come next. There were only two alternatives open to the Germans, this brave if circumspect official informed Goebbels: Either to assimilate or to liquidate (*ausrotten*) the Poles. 'Even if for biological reasons the adoption of such radical steps as have for instance been necessary against the Jews can be justified before the bar of history, such a solution still seems unworthy of the tradition of the German people, given that large parts of the population affected are still resident within the Reich's frontiers. The plan of that American Jew to sterilize the male population of the German Reich,' the official reminded Dr Goebbels, referring to Theodore Kaufman, 'was rightly pilloried by the entire German press.'³⁰

In sum it appears that by 1943 members of Goebbels' staff both in Berlin and in the field appreciated that the likely fate of the deported Jews was one about which they should use only the skimpiest Nazi euphemisms.³¹ The camouflage was universal and perfect. Addressing allegations by Dr Stephen F. Wise, president of the American Jewish Congress, Himmler wrote to Gestapo chief Heinrich Müller that he was

Dec 30, 1942

THE ROAD TO STALINGRAD 405

not surprised by such rumors, given the high mortality rate in the camps; he ordered all the cadavers 'of these deceased Jews' cremated or interred.³² During November and December the London newspapers published more reports. Goebbels' own Transocean service secretly forwarded to Himmler a Reuters report of February 14, 1943 alleging that six thousand Jews were being murdered in Poland every day.³³

In mid-December 1942 the B.B.C. concentrated for a whole week on these atrocities, announcing that Poland had become a charnel house, that over one-third of Poland's 3,531,000 Jews had been liquidated, and that the German public was turning a blind eye to the killings; the B.B.C. warned the Germans that they and their children's children would be cast out of the community of nations for all time as punishment.³⁴ Goebbels noted this with irritation in his diary: The Jews were exploiting every known propaganda technique—pathos, impertinence, and solemnity—to rouse the world against Germany; but the Reich still had more than enough Jewish pawns in its hands. 'The British are the Jews of the Aryan race.' he dictated, weightier arguments evidently failing him.³⁵ On December 22 his monitors reported that the B.B.C. had announced that Hitler was planning to complete liquidating the Jews by December 30: 'The Jews are first robbed of their civil rights and their property, then given less to eat than the rest, and finally thrown into concentration camps or deported to unknown destinations.' There were allegations about a camp in Danzig where Jews were executed by electric chair or gas; other propaganda broadcasts spoke of gas chambers and cyanide. Goebbels delegated to the urbane Hans Fritzsche the task of rebutting the stories.³⁶

'In the long run,' he wrote, 'I fear we shall not be able to get away with this by hushing it up. We're going to have to answer something if we are not to get gradually pinned down.' He privately believed that the Allies were actually glad that the Nazis were clearing out the 'Jewish rabble.' Adopting standard tactics, he ordered that no direct response be made to the allegations—they should remind the world about Britain's role in India instead.³⁷

OF greater weight in everybody's mind that winter was the unending battle for Stalingrad. It provided fresh ammunition for Goebbels' feud with Otto Dietrich, Hitler's dapper, spineless press chief—two months Goebbels' senior in age, but his equal in Party rank.³⁸ There was open war between them, waged with scarcely less ferocity than the Sixth Army's battle at Stalingrad. While the Machiavellian Goebbels based in Berlin mapped out broad propaganda strategy, Dietrich, resident at Hitler's HQ, issued directives (*Parolen*) to the press which often had the opposite effect. Dietrich found it irksome to be excluded from Hitler's formal conferences with Goebbels, and obnoxious that Goebbels regularly invited newspapermen to his morning conferences. The direct telephone lines from Goebbels' desk to his departmental chiefs including the 'German press' department in Room 24 were a thorn in Dietrich's flesh.

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He posted Helmut Sündermann, an experienced journalist, permanently into Goebbels' ministry as his deputy; to Goebbels, this smelt of the creation of an independent 'press ministry'.³⁹ During the summer of 1942 Hitler banged their heads together; he signed a decree ordering the two men to work in harmony; but he also instructed Goebbels to channel all directives to editors through Dietrich in future.⁴⁰

15 This left the way open for another Dietrich blunder. On September 15 he announced, 'The struggle for Stalingrad is nearing its triumphant conclusion'—an announcement, he said, was imminent. Some newspapers printed special editions. Headlines announced that Stalingrad was in the bag. Goebbels, more cautiously, warned his staff to strict secrecy. Even he however began his remarks on the eighteenth with the words, 'Now that the capture of Stalingrad is a certainty. . .'.⁴¹ Then caution returned and he urged editors to find something other than Stalingrad for their headlines—a wise move, because soon the High Command was talking about 'exceptionally stubborn' fighting for the city.⁴²

Goebbels was not encouraged to hear that the *Daily Mail* was calling Stalingrad the decisive battle of the war.⁴³ Blaming Goebbels for this new gaffe, London mocked that he had been rather faster on the draw than the Wehrmacht.⁴⁴ He cursed Dietrich out loud and announced that he would severely punish any editors who blindly issued special editions in future. 'I am, after all, the one with the name to lose,' he said, 'and I have no desire to see this name, which has taken me twenty years to earn, tarnished by thoughtless stunts like this'.⁴⁵

Hitler, like Dietrich, was taken in by his own propaganda. He assured Goebbels that they would capture Stalingrad shortly. He planned to continue the other prong of his eastern campaign, across the Caucasus mountains, all winter, then building a gigantic broad-track railroad from Germany to the new eastern territories.

Together they addressed a huge Sport Palace meeting on the thirtieth. Here Goebbels called for the first time for what he described as total war. 'The more total the war the better,' he said. Developing also his new propaganda line of 'strength through fear' he warned of the consequences of bolshevism but assured this mighty audience that the worst was over. He drew the familiar comparisons with the last months before 1933.⁴⁶ Sitting beside Hitler, Goebbels heard him announce: 'We shall be assaulting Stalingrad, and capturing it too—you can bank on that.' And, thundered Hitler into the microphones, 'You can take it from me, nobody is ever going to shift us from that spot.'

Rommel's position in Egypt also seemed impregnable. The field marshal came to Berlin and stayed for several days at Schwanenwerder, marking up his maps for the Führer and regaling Goebbels with stirring tales of the desert and of the armored gladiators who were disputing its command. Goebbels treated him to all the newsreels issued since Tobruk, and to his first ever glimpse of a color movie, the lavishly produced *Golden City*.⁴⁷

1942

ALLOWED back into Magda's home at Schwanenwerder for the Rommel visit, Goebbels was happy to see the children again after so long.⁴⁸ His new press expert Rudolf Semler found himself wondering sometimes however whether the minister really did love his children.⁴⁹ He seldom showed them true affection, noticed Semler, and only rarely saw them now. He refused to lower himself to play trains with little Hellmut; now seven, Hellmut's blue-gray eyes often had a vacant look which did not endear him to his father. With his precocious oldest daughters Helga and Hilde the minister either flirted outrageously or tested their intellect to the point of tears. The others he virtually ignored except for photo-calls. 'Our children have inherited your good looks and my brains,' he chaffed Magda once. 'How awful it would have been the other way around.' (He was a connoisseur of Bernard Shaw, from whom the remark originally came.)

scene

His forty-fifth birthday came. Hitler sent him a handwritten letter. Goebbels signed his reply 'At your undeviating and loyal service.'⁵⁰ The German Newsreel Company's gift to him was a private half-hour feature showing the Goebbels family—the children reciting poetry, riding ponies, chasing a squealing piglet, and greeting their mother or Rommel as their respective limousines drive up. Helga, ten years old now, with finely molded features and braided hair, was more ladylike than ever.⁵¹ 'I want just two children when I marry,' she once emphasized. 'Otherwise I won't have a moment to call my own!'⁵² Their mother, Magda, was now something of a virago. Most of her earlier femininity had passed to her five daughters—and to Hellmut too. The newsreel camera found him in the classroom of the village school, flunking the answer to a teacher's catch question about mathematics and offering a goofy smile through protruding upper teeth—the only thing he had inherited from his absentee father, who barely featured in the film himself.

BY that time, the late autumn of 1942, Hitler's calculus was also going wrong. His armies faced a stalemate in the Caucasus and perhaps even defeat in Stalingrad. Stalingrad became a matter of personal prestige between Germany's Führer and the Soviet leader after whom it had been named.⁵³ The morale reports from all Goebbels' sources brought mounting evidence of public disquiet.⁵⁴ People were openly wondering if Stalingrad was to become a second Verdun. In private, speaking to Major Martin, the minister criticized Hitler's strategic decisions as increasingly unrealistic.⁵⁵ With the sudden and unexpected collapse of Rommel's front at El Alamein, Goebbels' own private nightmare began. To the chronic pessimist Hans Fritzsche, returning from a tour of duty on the Stalingrad front, Goebbels admitted, 'You were right.'⁵⁶

He betrayed none of this in public. Speaking on October 21 he scoffed, 'One cannot prosecute a war without iron, oil, or wheat' (Stalin had now lost both the Donetz basin and the Ukraine).⁵⁷ Challenging the enemy's insidious theme that Hitler had lost the race because the Americans would shortly intervene he published in *Das Reich* an article entitled,

‘For whom is time working?’⁵⁸ He set up a special unit to start a whispering campaign about ‘miracle weapons,’ both real and imaginary.⁵⁹ He felt it necessary to warn all his senior staff not to display pessimism about the future.⁶⁰ But each passing week augmented the grounds for pessimism. On the night of November 6 the B.B.C. announced a British victory at El Alamein and the capture of twenty thousand Axis troops, most of them Italians. Goebbels’ machinery lapsed into silence.⁶¹ At his eleven o’clock conference on the seventh he suggested that they describe events at Alamein as ‘fighting’ rather than a ‘battle.’ With pursed lips he then announced, ‘Three large British convoys have left Gibraltar. This fact is a military secret and is to be treated as such.’⁶²

The Abwehr, Germany’s military Intelligence service, could offer no clue where these convoys were headed.⁶³ Goebbels feared they were bound for southern France or Italy itself.⁶⁴ But as Goebbels set out for the Munich anniversary of the 1923 putsch he heard that the Allied warships were landing tens of thousands of troops in French Morocco and Algeria. At the Brown House in Munich Hitler phoned Paris, Vichy, and Rome; he secretly invited Vichy France to join the war on his side. But as he began his speech at the beerhall he still had no reply.⁶⁵

Though still flawed by over-confident predictions about Stalingrad, it was otherwise a good speech. ‘There was a time,’ Goebbels heard him say, ‘when the Germans laid down their weapons at a quarter to twelve. I never, ever, stop until five past.’ His biting witticisms about the ‘perfumed dandy’ Anthony Eden delighted Goebbels, as did his sinister reference to his 1939 prophecy about the Jews. ‘Of those who laughed then,’ Hitler mocked, ‘countless already laugh no longer today.’ Then he boasted that Stalingrad was as good as Germany’s: ‘That was what I wanted to capture, and, do you know—modest that we are—we’ve got it, too! There are only a few more tiny pockets!’

Back at the Brown House afterward he told Goebbels that the French were unlikely to join the German cause. The Allies would certainly not hesitate to do what he had refrained from in 1940, namely bombing Paris. Sure enough, the Vichy French admiral in Algeria, Jean-François Darlan, asked the Americans for an armistice. Goebbels returned to Berlin late on the ninth. At his Berlin conference the next morning he cajoled his department heads once more to keep a stiff upper lip. It was like a football match, he suggested, developing a new line of debate: The home team had been four-nil until half-time, but now suddenly the visitors had scored a goal.⁶⁶ He hoped for dramatic news from Hitler’s meeting that day with Pierre Laval, the French prime minister, and directed the press to express ‘warm feelings’ toward France.⁶⁷ Nothing came of the meeting however and Hitler ordered his troops into the unoccupied half of France. He moved his air force straight into Tunisia, far ahead of the Allied invasion troops. By occupying this ‘bastion of North Africa’ he expected to gain another six months and perhaps even give Rommel another chance of victory. ‘German propaganda,’ admitted Goebbels on the twelfth, ‘is in for a tough time. Its most importance

Nov 22, 1942

THE ROAD TO STALINGRAD 409

principle must be to put on a resolute and confident face, to show no signs of weakness, and . . . to pull everyone together as Churchill did after Dunkirk.⁶⁸

BRITISH air-raid dead so far totaled forty-three thousand; the corresponding German figure was 10,900.⁶⁹ Preparing to turn the tables on Germany, the British government was loudly proclaiming that it was Hitler who had started the bombing of civilians.⁷⁰ In Tokyo the Japanese put captured American bomber crews on trial. Goebbels decided against encouraging the lynching of British bomber crews in Germany however; rather grotesquely, he argued that the result would be total lawlessness.⁷¹ Touring the most vulnerable cities in the west he was encouraged to find people there more phlegmatic than the S.D. reports suggested.⁷² 'The enemy,' he announced on November 17, 1942 in Wuppertal, scene of many of his earliest political memories, 'has thank God left us in no doubt as to the fate he has in store for us if we ever lose faith in victory.'

With Rommel now in retreat, Goebbels suggested that the Mediterranean was of less importance than 'the war of the lieutenant-commanders,' as he called the U-boat war. A retreat in North Africa was regrettable, he said, but not of pivotal importance. The German forces had sunk a million tons of shipping during September, 750,000 tons in October, and as much again already during November, or so he claimed. As for the British air raids, which had now resumed, he emphasized: 'Mr Churchill cannot wash his hands of the historic guilt for having started this war against innocent civilians.' He promised that the hour of retribution would come.⁷³

Two days later the Red Army crashed through the eastern front at Stalingrad, and Hitler's Sixth Army found itself fighting for its life. By November 22, 1942 it was totally surrounded, and Goebbels was facing the most challenging crisis of his career as a propagandist.

Dec 1942

47: Things have not Panned out

How much longer,' Dr Goebbels challenged his loyal press officer Schirmeister that autumn, 'do you think this war's going to last?'

'If it goes on like this,' hedged Schirmeister, 'we might end it next year.'

Goebbels looked at him expressionlessly. 'I don't know,' he murmured.¹

As Germany's fortunes declined, his own would improve. The more the skies darkened, the more the people needed reminding that the darkest hour comes before the dawn; the more Hitler immured himself in his remote HQ, the more somebody else had to take control at the center. From December 1942 Goebbels started to cultivate his fellow gauleiters, inviting them round to his ministry.² Many of them were veterans of the earliest days of the party. He saw in them an elite upon whom to fall back when the going got tougher. He was apprehensive lest any gauleiter suspect he might be trying to usurp Hitler's powers, let alone those of the roughneck Martin Bormann, their titular head; Bormann took pains to hold Goebbels and all others of superior intelligence at arm's length from his Führer.

Writing in *Das Reich* Goebbels had declared, 'Nations and mankind alike are at their strongest when fighting for survival.'³ It was to this survival instinct in the Germans that he now appealed. The British recognized the magnetism of his 'strength through fear' propaganda and tried to undermine it by attacking him, calling him the biggest, most ridiculous, and most contemptible of liars. 'Even so,' one British commentator conceded, 'he's the best political brain of the whole Nazi bunch. That's why he's got to be watched.'⁴ To defeat him they resorted to innuendoes broadcast by their Soldatensender Calais transmitter. They broadcast a lurid and wholly fictitious account of Goebbels' Christmas Eve to blacken his name. 'The chief,' noted one of Sefton Delmer's experts afterward, 'has been at the height of his form over the Christmas season.'⁵

That autumn there was a genuine attempt on Goebbels' life. In November a Dr Hans Kummerow, a technician with the Löwe radio company in Berlin, confessed to plotting to blow him up with a remote-controlled bomb which he would plant, disguised as an angler, beneath a bridge on Schwanenwerder. Schirmeister attended the trial; he told Goebbels that it had revealed a picture of a 'totally degenerate' intelligentsia. From now

on four detectives and a police car escorted Goebbels wherever he went. At Lanke machine-gun nests were emplaced around the house.⁶ As a surprise Christmas gift Hitler sent over an armor-plated Mercedes. Goebbels called it an 'armored coffin' but the Führer gave him no choice but to use it.⁷

That Christmas was overshadowed by renewed problems with Magda's health. After another minor heart attack she was again hospitalized at the West End sanitarium. Two blood transfusions led to complications, and Goebbels recorded what were possibly genuine concerns for her life. Surrounded by their children they celebrated a cheerless wedding anniversary at her bedside. He lamented in his diary, 'It's a shame that I so seldom get to see the children.' Magda struggled out to Lanke for New Year's Eve, and Helga and Heide were allowed to stay up chattering until midnight as a treat.⁸ Then it was back to bed for their mother. Belatedly thanking police general Kurt Daluege in January 1943 for the gift of a pheasant, Magda apologized, 'I have been in a sanitarium for some weeks after a heart attack and I'm going to have to stay in for some time.'⁹

The plight of the Sixth Army in Stalingrad worsened beyond relief. Broadcasting his New Year's sermon Goebbels suggested that his listeners compare their situation with that of the year before when the entire army, struggling at Moscow, had been saved by their Führer's sheer willpower alone. During the past summer they had conquered an area twice that of the British Isles, rich in raw materials, in grain, and in industry. 'Now we've got the upper hand,' he suggested. A world war was however once again upon them. 'Across all the seven seas rages the termagant of destruction,' he said, 'a vengeful goddess of history, raising her arm to smite the Anglo-Saxon powers whose ministers so recklessly and needlessly unleashed this war.' Hinting once again at the coming of a more total warfare he sprinkled his oratorical glitter across the entire German people—across the workers, intellectuals, doctors, teachers, civil servants, and even journalists. 'The continents tremble to the roar of our weaponry.' Nobody knew how long this war would last, he allowed. It might well end as suddenly as it had begun. 'Yonder,' he promised, as the last hours of the old year slipped away, 'we can already see the light.'¹⁰

Nothing could conceal however that Nazi propaganda was now on the defensive. 'It is not known to us,' his ministry cautioned in a secret directive, 'how far the Soviet resources are already exhausted.'¹¹ He forbade editors to adopt phrases coined by the enemy like 'United Nations' or even 'Allied,' since these were throwbacks to the previous world war and designed to remind the Germans subliminally that they had lost that one too.¹² Made-in-USA phrases like 'Liberty ships' and 'Flying Fortresses' were also banned, as was the phrase 'Fortress Europe.'¹³ The latter invoked, he said, the picture of a fortress under siege, complete with the implication that sooner or later it would be overrun.¹⁴ All of which did not prevent him, from time to time, using the phrase 'Fortress Europe' himself.¹⁵

He was not yet worried by the Americans. Before returning to Rom-

mel's staff in May 1942 Berndt had suggested they draw upon the occult in their propaganda to the Americans. 'Time for Nostradamus once again,' agreed Goebbels.¹⁶ Gienanth, his former press attaché in Washington, sat in on some interrogations of American bomber crews and told Goebbels afterward that they were in a state of shock, weeping with home-sickness and 'ready to carry out any unpatriotic act.' The British were tougher, he said, but equally bereft of political ideals. 'Nearly all of them voice antisemitic remarks,' noted Goebbels optimistically, 'but more from instinct than insight.'¹⁷

ATTEMPTS at supplying the Sixth Army by air were failing. By December 1942 rumors of a Stalingrad crisis were sweeping the country. 'Things have not panned out as we expected,' Goebbels dictated to his diary on the eighteenth. 'It doesn't seem to be as easy to force open the enemy ring round Stalingrad as some of us had thought.'¹⁸ The High Command ordered a news blackout. The army ordered its radio commentator to purvey only optimism.¹⁹

Some fundamental decisions were called for. Hitler's HQ slowly bestirred itself. Late in December Martin Bormann finally visited Dr Goebbels to canvass his ideas on total war. Goebbels had been developing these ideas for almost two years. He had published an article about 'total war' in *Das Reich* on February 17, 1941. 'The German people,' he had written in his diary six months later, 'has a right to a socialist war.'²⁰ A year later he was convinced that Stalin was squeezing more than Hitler was out of his people. 'A nation that endeavors to fight such a total war,' he had dictated in September 1942, 'has exceptionally dangerous powers of resistance.'²¹ Reporting back from the eastern front later that month his friend and adviser Major Titel spoke of the outrage that 'certain abuses' at home were causing among the troops.²² Goebbels thereupon put his ideas for 'radicalizing and totalizing' the war to Walther Hewel, Julius Schaub, Alwin-Broder Albrecht, and other long-standing members of Hitler's personal entourage.²³ If it had worked for Stalin, he argued, then how much better were the prospects in Germany, where there was so much more slack waiting to be taken up. But, while he himself lived a most ascetic existence, those around him did not. Hans Fritzsche for instance was among the elite who liked to indulge in oysters, real coffee, and fine wines at Otto Horcher's gourmet restaurant in Berlin.²⁴

Britain had introduced compulsory labor service for women in March. Goebbels had long believed that at least women without families aged up to fifty should work, regardless of their social standing.²⁵ In December 1942 he stated this to Hitler and added that school-age boys and girls could help man the anti-aircraft guns.²⁶ But Hitler had complex biological arguments against it, and others close to him like Göring and the manpower commissioner Fritz Sauckel assured him that such crisis measures were not called for.

Goebbels worked hard to promote his belief in total war. In each offensive, he argued, they had lacked the ten percent that mattered. He

Dec 28, '42 - '4

discussed it separately with Speer, Funk, and Krosigk, but petty jealousies still smoldered between them as well as between Göring, Lammers, and Bormann; each of them had spent years establishing his own power base, and none would willingly cede territory.²⁷ Speer agreed on the malady. 'In every offensive,' he said to the central planners, 'we lack just ten percent.' He warned of a coming war of attrition if they could not manage that extra effort. 'I spoke with Goebbels recently,' he continued. 'He holds the view that the public is actually waiting to be called upon to make this last supreme effort.'²⁸ In 1944 however Speer would become one of the most trenchant opponents of Goebbels' total war.

Pride as much as prejudice constrained Hitler from agreeing to total war. Not until the Sixth Army's position in Stalingrad seemed desperate as it was now did he send Bormann to Goebbels' mansion at Lanke on December 28 to explore with him, as Bormann jotted in his pocket notebook, 'a total effort by the German people to increase its war potential.'²⁹ Bormann flattered Goebbels cleverly, calling him the 'harbinger' of total war and speaking of their Führer's faith in him.³⁰ The proposals which Goebbels outlined for releasing manpower to war industry and the forces did not however commend themselves to Bormann: They were rooted in his fiery socialist adolescence; he wanted punitive sacrifices by the 'upper ten thousand' who still acted as though there were no war. 'I am glad,' the minister remarked afterward at dinner, 'that I have always lived in frugal wartime style.'³¹ Despite Bormann's misgivings, Goebbels set to at once, drawing up a plan for all-out war. 'I see my main task in the weeks ahead,' he dictated at Lanke three days after Bormann's visit, 'as being to radicalize our internal management of the war so that there can be no more talk of sparing the home front and spoiling the war.'³² He closed the next day's entry, the first of 1943, with this philosophy: 'The radical and most total war is the shortest.'³³

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For several days after submitting his proposals he heard nothing. He pressed the Wolf's Lair daily for a decision. Bormann urged Goebbels to be patient, pleading that it was not so simple to draft new regulations. The minister's staff drew up a more detailed outline plan: It included the introduction of labor service for women, cutbacks in the manufacture of consumer goods, the closure of department stores, and the release of two-thirds of all streetcar and railroad conductors. Dr Lammers, the Reich's top civil servant, agreed to call a Cabinet-level conference on January 7. 'I am today firmly convinced,' Goebbels recorded, 'that if we give it all we've got we'll smash the Soviet Union this coming summer.'³⁴ As he understood it, the idea was that, after Lammers had put their finished plan to Hitler, a triumvirate would implement it with dictatorial powers delegated to them by their over-burdened Führer.³⁵ The three he had in mind were himself, Lammers, and Bormann. Göring, as president of the defense committee and chief of the Four-Year Plan, had far too much on his plate already. Not that Goebbels gainsaid Göring's authority—in fact he would draft a fulsome letter to him on his fiftieth birthday a few days hence.³⁶

There is no doubt that Goebbels, perhaps over-simplifying, saw total war as the ultimate answer to his embattled country's difficulties.³⁷ 'Total war,' he felt, 'should have been brought in eighteen months ago.'³⁸ They had the manpower, if only they could drain it off the home front.

Lammers held the promised conference on January 8—delayed one day by Speer's tardiness. Sauckel at once threw a spanner into the works, declaring himself quite capable of raising the manpower without total war. Funk and Bormann gave only limited backing to Goebbels' plan.³⁹ Frustrated, Goebbels re-ran Russian newsreels of the siege of Leningrad which showed what people were willing to do if pressed.⁴⁰ More conservative than the Goebbels plan, the document which Lammers drafted and Hitler eventually signed spoke of releasing up to 700,000 men to the armed forces; however it provided for a three-man committee to run total war acting only 'in close touch' with Goebbels.⁴¹ He tried for several days to become at least an equal wheel on this unwieldy wagon. Lammers sought in vain to appease him.⁴² Goebbels felt slighted; he was sure that 'certain circles' were trying to freeze him out.⁴³ When he phoned the Wolf's Lair, Lammers rebuked him, insisting that this was what the Führer himself had decided.⁴⁴ The whole episode probably recalled to Goebbels his galling omission from Hitler's first cabinet in 1933.⁴⁵

When Hans Lammers presided over the first meeting on January 20, Goebbels rather pathetically called it the Committee of Four in his diary; but he was very much a junior partner.⁴⁶ He harangued them all for an hour and dictated mechanically afterward, 'I am still seen and recognized as the driving force.' This however was not true. Within his own four walls he muttered to personal staff that Lammers had 'wet blanketed' his ideas.⁴⁷ For the next month he grappled with the bureaucratic red tape with which Lammers deftly packaged each measure that his three-man committee hesitantly approved.

THUS Goebbels began dreaming about a spectacular mass meeting at which he would appeal over their heads to the people, and ask *them* what they desired. *Vox populi*—the voice of the street: Ugly enough, but the next best thing to a dictatorship of the proletariat.

During these first three weeks of January 1943, meanwhile, the Sixth Army was dying in Stalingrad. The airlift of food and ammunition failed as the airfields were lost, aircraft engines froze, and aircrew morale slumped. Although Hitler continued a news blackout policy, hoping for better times, millions of Germans now suspected that something was going badly wrong. Goebbels promised to persuade Hitler to release the awful news.⁴⁸ Colonel Martin reported to Berlin that Hitler seemed to be out of touch with reality.⁴⁹ Hitler was not alone in this. Attending one propaganda ministry meeting, the army's radio commentator General Dittmar was horrified by the superficiality on display. 'Even that clever-dick Hans Fritzsche asked me how close we are to relieving Stalingrad,' he noted.⁵⁰ Five more days would pass before the High Command obliquely admitted that the Sixth Army was encircled, and had been for

Jan 22, 1943

two months.⁵¹ On January 21 Goebbels dictated that it was time to make a clean breast to the people. 'It should have been done long ago,' he wrote, adding in almost treasonable language: 'But the Führer was against it until now.' Perhaps Stalingrad might yet become a symbol, as the Alcazár of Toledo had been for the nationalists in the Spanish civil war. He announced to his ministerial conference that he was going to see Hitler the next day to demand that they adhere in future to the unvarnished truth—and to total war.⁵² 21.

It was misty, gray, and damp as he arrived at the Wolf's Lair on January 22. Hitler's jug-eared chief adjutant General Rudolf Schmundt had just returned from the Stalingrad front. He besought Goebbels to force through his total-war plans. When Goebbels protested to Hitler about being frozen out of the Lammers committee, Hitler expressed surprise: 'You yourself had Bormann inform me that you were happy with the role of "harbinger,"' he said, 'and preferred to leave the implementation to the experts.'⁵³ Strolling around the compound with Goebbels and his Alsatian bitch Blondi, Hitler blamed the coming catastrophe in Stalingrad on Göring and Germany's allies. The Hungarian troops had abandoned their tanks and stormed the empty hospital trains waiting to carry casualties away.⁵⁴ There was however one good thing about their allies' failure, he remarked. If at the end of the war Germany stood alone the spoils of victory would be hers alone too. He had resigned himself, he said, to the loss of all twenty-two divisions in Stalingrad. The phone rang incessantly as they talked, bringing fresh messages of woe.⁵⁵ 22.

Goebbels then told him of his plans for total war. He promised to raise 1.5 to two million soldiers by the coming summer. Hitler winced at the mention of female labor service, but otherwise endorsed everything.⁵⁶ 'He would prefer,' dictated Goebbels with probably less than utter candor, 'that I do not join the three-man committee myself—so as not to become bogged down with the minutiae of this vast program.' Hitler had however authorized him to attend all its meetings and to ensure that all its proposals were 'radical' enough. The minister further told his diary that Hitler had ordered an internal dictatorship set up with Goebbels as the 'psychological dictator and motive force.' This was somewhat premature, indeed downright untrue. As Himmler was informed a few days later, Goebbels had tried to persuade Hitler to appoint him alone as 'Führer of the Home Front.' 'But he has not succeeded.'⁵⁷ AC

AFTER this meeting Hitler had to see Goebbels in a new light. None of his army generals had ever stood up to him like this. For that matter, none could inspire him the way his propaganda minister did either.⁵⁸ When he now asked Goebbels to return as often as possible, it was perhaps no longer a casual pleasantry. As he hoisted himself aboard the Berlin-bound train at Rastenburg, Goebbels caught sight of young men of the Führer's escort battalion on another platform, mustering for the eastern front. He wondered how many would survive the next twelve months.⁵⁹

The Sixth Army would probably not survive another week. As Goebbels began drafting the inevitable communiqué—choosing his language with the utmost care, because in ages to come Germans would always recall how they had heard of the death of their army in Stalingrad—the mood in official Berlin was already catastrophic. 'For the first time,' noted General Dittmar, 'there is everywhere personal bitterness against the Führer who led us to Stalingrad... A searing sense of shame fills us all.'⁶⁰ Dittmar heard from Colonel Martin how easily Goebbels had persuaded Hitler to change the tenor of the High Command communiqué to allow greater gravity and more truth after the generals themselves had not dared to ask Hitler themselves. The question was, Martin had said, how to restore Hitler's bruised prestige among the troops.

It was a somber time. Goebbels decreed that January the Thirtieth, tenth anniversary of the Nazi seizure of power, would not be a public holiday: No flags, no parades. At eleven A.M. Göring would broadcast to the armed forces from the air ministry. At five P.M. Goebbels would speak from the Sport Palace and read out a proclamation on Hitler's behalf.⁶¹ Briefed by the British embassy in Stockholm, London shortly announced all this—Goebbels was furious that the enemy had somehow learned of his secret plans.⁶²

7 British Intelligence seemed to be better in every way than Hitler's. When Churchill and Roosevelt met in Casablanca, and announced their demand for unconditional surrender, Goebbels at first missed it and then ignored it; his rage was directed at the Abwehr which had confidently translated Casablanca as 'The White House' and declared that the Allied meeting was in Washington.⁶³ On January 27 Goebbels briefed journalists that unconditional surrender was probably Roosevelt's reference to the capitulation of the French generals in Algiers, and even when Churchill announced the demand in the House of Commons Goebbels ignored it, his only comments being on the prime minister's statements about the submarine war and General Eisenhower's appointment as supreme Allied commander.⁶⁴ Reviewing thirty different Nazi newspapers, Allied Intelligence officers found their 'unconditional surrender' slogan ignored except for one reference in the *Deutsche Allgemeine Zeitung*.⁶⁵

Returning to his struggle for total war, Goebbels dictated a blazing article for *Das Reich*.⁶⁶ When the *Reich Gazette* published the first ordinances closing down bars, confectioners, and jewelers however, and announcing the call-up of men and women for labor service, the upper age limit for women was set at forty-five, not at fifty.⁶⁷ The lack-luster Lammers committee also showed a marked reluctance to shut down many businesses. The enemy bombers, Goebbels bitterly pointed out to Hitler eighteen months later, closed most of them down anyway.⁶⁸

Infuriated by the committee's weakness, he decided to go ahead with his plan for a mass meeting to put pressure on Hitler. 'Public opinion,' he noted, 'is always a powerful ally.'⁶⁹ He had honed his skills promoting the images of Hitler, Rommel, Speer, and others. The time had now come to promote his own.

Jan 1 1943

NEVER had Nazi Germany suffered a disaster like the one approaching in Stalingrad. Goebbels ordered the magnificent Hitler posters entitled 'Adolf Hitler is victory' called in and stored away for future use; a tenth-anniversary poster designed by Mjöltnir, the top Nazi artist, 'January 30, 1933-January 30, 1943: one fight, one victory,' was called in and pulped.⁷⁰ On the historic thirtieth itself, British Mosquito bombers inflicted on Göring of all people the ultimate indignity of having to broadcast from an air ministry shelter, and an hour later than planned.⁷¹ As Dr Goebbels spoke from the Sport Palace that evening the bombers reappeared; he carried on regardless.⁷²

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Goebbels had become by default the spokesman for the Reich. He had tried in vain to get Hitler to speak since December.⁷³ During the coming year in fact Hitler would speak only four times (and Göring only this once). As the Führer reminded Goebbels before this speech, it was still proper to compare Germany's situation now with that of 1933. Goebbels had already done this subtly with his Christmas broadcast, bringing in the voices of soldiers in Stalingrad, Lapland, southern France, and the Caucasus—in short from the four corners of Hitler's still vast empire. He now did it again with the radio preamble to his speech of January 30:

This is the Greater German Radio with the German shortwave stations beamed to all parts of the world—

The transmitter groups Bohemia-Moravia with the stations Prague, Brno, and Moravian Ostrau; the stations of the Government-General, Kraków, Warsaw, and Lvów; the Baltic transmitter group with the chief station Riga and the stations Madona, Gdynia, and Libau; Radio Kaunas with Vilnius, Radio Reval and Dorpat, Radio Minsk with Baranovice.

The transmitter group Ukraine with the chief station Ukraine, the station Vinnitsa and the shortwave station Kiev; the German Europa stations Alps, Bremen, Calais, Danube, Frisians, and Vistula—

and so the list went on, as listeners were reminded that their troops were also in Belgrade, Athens, Salonika, the occupied eastern territories, Norway, Holland, Belgium, Paris, Argenteuil, Bordeaux, Lille, Normandy, Rennes, Bulgaria, Croatia, Romania, Slovakia, and Hungary.⁷⁴

The British thought his delivery diffuse and nervous; the Americans considered that he threw in his climax sooner than usual. Twice he was actually heckled. 'The German people want to know,' one voice was picked up shouting, 'won't we be hearing from the Führer?' As he then read out Hitler's proclamation, the radio microphones recorded applause but also another voice shouting, 'Cease! Stop!'⁷⁵ Even so, as he finished speaking, no foreign listener could assume that Germany was near collapse—'And that was the object of the exercise,' he dictated afterward. His audience of Berliners had acted 'with sound political instinct' throughout. As he climbed into his armor-plated Mercedes he asked his adjutant what he had thought of it, and back at No. 20 Hermann-Göring Strasse he had his chauffeur Rach read aloud, from Nietzsche's *Will to*

Power, the recipe for 'what the masses call a great man.' 'He must be outrageous, jealous, manipulative, designing, flattering, fawning, inflated,' this ran: 'In short all things to all men.' Goebbels unconsciously slipped into his speaking posture, his hands planted on his hips. 'Make no mistake,' he shrilled. 'You can't change the masses. They will always be the same: Dumb, gluttonous, and forgetful.'⁷⁶

In this January 30, 1943 speech he had made no reference to U-boats, Churchill, Roosevelt, or North Africa; nor for that matter to unconditional surrender. Sixty percent of his speech had dealt with Russia, ten percent with Britain, and only three percent with the United States. He had used the word *total* ten times, and ninety-three different negative words like *danger, inconceivable, strain, difficult, hard, menace, catastrophe, superhuman, trials, misery, anxiety, hopeless, defeat and desperate*.⁷⁷ Twenty-three times he had referred to 'faith' (*Glaube and gläubig*). 'Defeat,' the Americans unkindly concluded, 'drives the Nazi orators into the arms of historical analogies, bombastic heroizations, and empty irrational appeals.'

On the last day of January 1943 Hitler dramatically promoted the doomed Sixth Army's commander to field marshal, thus pressing a pistol into his hand. As a German officer Friedrich Paulus had no alternative but suicide. 'Fate,' Goebbels argued in his diary, 'has put him in a situation where, now that so many of his men have died in battle, he must forgo fifteen or twenty years of life to achieve immortality.'⁷⁸ He asked Fritzsche, who had been with Paulus most recently, for his view. 'Herr Minister,' responded Fritzsche. 'I'd take a bet on it. The field marshal won't surrender.'⁷⁹

That same night Moscow radio announced that Paulus had surrendered. Two days later they added the names of thirteen of his generals. Goebbels was thunderstruck. Having ordered their men to fight to the death, had these generals meekly turned themselves over to the Russians? Hitler phoned. Goebbels called him back and recommended they postpone any comment—they could not be certain one way or the other.⁸⁰ Paulus' surrender made him more determined than ever to take his own life if the time ever came.

He broadcast the prepared communiqué on Stalingrad at four P.M. on the third—it was 'grave, objective, sober, without pathos but also not without warmth'—accompanied by the heroic ceremonial which he had elaborated with Hitler in advance. 'Loyal to its oath of allegiance to the last breath,' the communiqué read, the Sixth Army had 'succumbed to the superior enemy strength and to the disfavor of the circumstances.' Goebbels ordered three days of national mourning.⁸¹

Three days later at the Wolf's Lair Goebbels was among the gauleiters who heard Hitler's explanation for Stalingrad. 'You are witnessing a catastrophe of unheard-of magnitude,' Hitler began, before again blaming his allies. 'The Russians broke through, the Romanians gave up, the Hungarians didn't even put up a fight.' He estimated their own losses at one hundred thousand dead.⁸² It was a setback, he admitted, but by no

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48: Sin Will Pluck on Sin

AFTER Stalingrad, Joseph Goebbels revealed to Schirmeister that if the worse came to the worst he was going to kill himself and his entire family.¹ His contemptuous remarks about Paulus showed that he regarded self-immolation as the prerequisite for entry to Valhalla.² Besides, as he often said, for the top Nazis there was no going back; the enemy had often warned that they could expect nothing but the gallows.

This lethal resolve concentrated his mind, and he threw his puny frame into reviving Germany's fortunes with a fervor lacking in those colleagues who had less cause to fear retribution. His days became even longer. He spoke to workers on the tank-assembly lines of the Alkett plant, gauleiters at Posen, army adjutants from every theater of war.

In his view government officials presented a special problem. His own Staatssekretär Gutterer had privately decided months earlier that the war was lost, and hundreds more thought like him. In mid-February Goebbels addressed the entire government in the chancellery building—a 'somewhat leaden' audience, he found them.³ 'Goebbels told us,' wrote Ribbentrop's Staatssekretär von Weizsäcker afterward, 'that we're too defeatist—we know too much to have faith, and too little to comprehend.'⁴ Göring's Staatssekretär Milch was more impressed. 'Minister Goebbels,' he told his colleagues afterwards, 'using incredibly apt and clear, convincing language, indicated that the leadership of a state has the obligation during a crisis to keep a stiff upper lip. . . . Our people look to us for leadership. They must not gain the impression that we are not taking up this energy which they are offering to us. From thousands if not millions of letters, this want emerges,' added Milch, quoting Goebbels.⁵

Göring, the real culprit, had taken to his bed after Stalingrad.⁶ The army's generals, sensing themselves also under attack, pointed out that Goebbels too was supposed to give up several thousand of his ministry's staff toward the promised 800,000 new troops. General von Unruh swooped on Goebbels' office flanked by General Friedrich Olbricht—of whom more later—and several other officers, and called on him to justify his non-fulfilment of his 3,400-man quota. 'From what I was told,' related an S.S. Obersturmbannführer gleefully to Himmler, 'the Reichsminister threw a fit and intimidated General von Unruh that the Wehrmacht would do well to make a clean sweep in Bendler Strasse [the war ministry] first and see to it that their fat and well-fed majors there are put to

Febr. 12, 1943

sensible work.⁷ The row left feelings ruffled everywhere.

On February 12, after a conspiratorial meeting with Speer and Ley, Goebbels decided to go ahead with his Big Meeting idea. Just six days later he would pack the Sport Palace with his trusty Berliners and stage the most important mass meeting of his life; he would deliver to them a white-hot speech on total war, and broadcast it worldwide.⁸ He banked on his audience's response to show the out-of-touch bigwigs like Lammers and Bormann which way the wind was blowing. 'The Führer,' he dictated, 'is much more radical than he's generally given credit for—if only we can stop the fainthearts beating a path to his door and pleading for moderation.'⁹

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He began dictating the historic total war speech two days later. Over the next days he trimmed and modulated its tone, and even checked passages on foreign policy with Ribbentrop's officials.¹⁰ He was planning to present Hitler with a *fait accompli*. Probably for the first time, he did not even show him the script.¹¹

Structured in three parts the speech drew on Goebbels' twenty years of experience as a demagogue. He selected mawkish, abstract phrases that had not failed him before ('I want to speak to you from the depths of my heart, to the depths of your heart'). He conjured with *holy earnest*, with *utter candor*, with *historic missions*, with *devout faith*, and with *solemn and sacred oaths*. He would begin in the third person ('they'), glide imperceptibly up into the oily-familiar second ('*ich frage euch*') and finally unite orator and listening public into one all-embracing, gigantic, multi-millionfold first-person *we* ('we all, the children of our nation . . .'). *Heroic, steel, gigantic*—the adjectives were all there, as were the clichés. The speech would take as its starting point the nation's eagerness for total war and follow through with warnings that a bolshevik victory would entail the liquidation of their entire intelligentsia. Specters of 'Jewish liquidation squads,' terrorism, starvation, and anarchy haunted the pages of his script, as did more complex and inbred hatreds too, as he drew an angry picture of an upper class who must now be compelled to 'sully their dainty hands' along with the rest. In short he saw in this appeal for total war his chance to rededicate the party to its former socialist ideals.¹²

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On the morning of the big speech, February 18, his ministry telexed the entire text to newspapers, forewarning editors that Dr Goebbels intended to ask the audience ten questions. 'In your front-page make-up,' the newspapers were instructed, 'their response is to be reported as the express will of the entire nation.'¹³ While there were no *claqueurs* in the vast auditorium, Goebbels had arranged for the usual canned applause and laughter to be trickled into the loudspeakers to trigger audience response at the proper moments.

The demand for tickets was colossal. Fifteen thousand packed in, just as in the good old days before 1933, ordinary people coming together in a mood of self-doubt.¹⁴ Here in Germany's undoubted hour of crisis they were to rediscover their community of purpose and sense of power. The hall was sparsely decorated. Just one huge banner hung above the podium,

reading 'TOTAL WAR: SHORTEST WAR.' As Goebbels skillfully whipped them up, his audience had an overwhelming sense of release. He had deliberately chosen the amplitude, intonation, and rhythm of each passage. The newsreels captured extraordinary scenes of emotion. Within minutes the audience was leaping to its feet, saluting, screaming, and chanting ('Führer command! We obey!'). 'Goebbels' delivery,' wrote one postwar analyst of this famous speech, 'was grave, imploring, moralizing, stern, provocative, mocking, derisive, ironic, and even monotonous as need dictated.' 'Key words, particularly superlatives, were drawn out and accentuated. He paused deliberately before important passages. Embarking on a particular challenge he increased the tempo so that the words came out in a rush, and he leaned closer to the microphone to increase the volume. He was particularly adept at the trick of building on applause by briefly carrying on speaking despite it. He augmented the shouts of assent to his questions by hurling words into the applause like "Is that what you want?" or "Are you willing?"'¹⁵ Over two hundred times his audience interrupted with exclamations, shouts of approval, applause, and laughter; soon they were cheering every sentence, sometimes every phrase. One seasoned journalist later described the audience reaction as a kind of euphoria. 'Even the foreign and neutral journalists were excitedly jumping up and down applauding Goebbels.'¹⁶

The audience included most of the government and party leadership. The newsreels show the front rows filled with war-wounded, attended by Red Cross nurses, and bemedalled soldiers. Behind them, as Goebbels remarked during the speech, sat Berlin's ordinary munitions workers, doctors, scientists, artists, engineers, architects, teachers, and civil servants ('Of course,' he pointed out, 'the Jews are not represented here').¹⁷ Camera operators picked out popular filmstars like Heinrich George—he was seen in close-up cheering, leaping to his feet, and saluting excitedly—and several children in the front rows, including Helga and Hilde Goebbels, allowed their first glimpse of such a mass meeting.¹⁷ Between them sat their mother, who had just been discharged from the clinic.

Addressing this huge multitude Goebbels promised an unvarnished picture of the crisis—he flattered the 'schooled and disciplined German people' that they could be trusted with the truth. He was not going to apportion blame for Stalingrad, he said: the future would show why the sacrifice had not been in vain. Germany and her allies, he said to tactful applause, were the last bulkhead of 'our venerable continent.'¹⁸ Toward the end he hurled at them the ten questions, challenging their belief in victory, their willingness to fight, and their determination to work if need be sixteen hours each day and to 'give all they had for victory.' The orgiastic climax was reached by the question: 'Do you want total war? Do you want war more total, if need be, and more radical than we can even begin to conceive of today?' And then, almost casually, 'Do you

* This sentence was cut from the published transcript.

Feb 18 1943

agree that anybody who injures our war effort should be put to death?'¹⁹
The bellow of assent each time was deafening.

He dined that evening with Milch, Paul Körner, Wilhelm Stuckart, Otto Thierack, Ley, and Speer. Somebody remarked that the speech had been a kind of 'silent *coup d'état*' by Goebbels. He quoted this phrase with satisfaction in his diary, while hastening to add that the coup was 'against bureaucracy.'²⁰

This speech was his greatest achievement in a lifetime of speaking. Curiously, neither Hitler nor Göring bothered to listen to the broadcast. Hitler was at the front, and Göring had retired to bed at five P.M.²¹

Goebbels however heard it broadcast at eight P.M.; the answers to his ten questions nearly burst the loudspeaker membranes of his radio. For twenty full minutes after his final defiant phrase, 'Arise as one nation, and let the storm burst upon them!' the radio network continued to broadcast the tumult of acclaim. The field agencies of the S.D., briefed to stand by twelve hours earlier, had sent agents to eavesdrop in railroad waiting rooms and cafés; at one A.M. the S.D. regions (*Leitabschnitte*) telexed their collated reports to Himmler's Amt III in Berlin, and this provided the propaganda ministry with a glowing summary two hours later.²² Goebbels' field offices reported in equally favorable terms.²³ Studying every available newspaper from around the world, he basked in glory. The Forschungsamt, wiretapping the foreign journalists in Berlin, recorded high praise. Only the final S.D. report was critical.²⁴ Jealous army officers were also less enthusiastic.²⁵

No matter, Goebbels was the man of the moment. 'It is beautiful,' he dictated, 'to be the gauleiter of Berlin and to gather around one so many prominent men of party and state.' He decided to do it more often, 'since the central leadership is lacking now, during the Führer's absence from Berlin.'²⁶ These words reveal that he was setting himself very ambitious goals indeed.

THE fine weather which now set in displeased Goebbels. For his purposes he needed the winter gloom to linger on.²⁷ Toward the end of February the eastern front was stabilized again; he forbade the media to mention it. Their propaganda would forfeit all respect if it bleated about crises each winter, and forgot them in the spring. When the Waffen S.S. shortly retook Kharkov, Goebbels even tried to prevent any special communiqué being issued.²⁸ 'We got over the first winter crisis relatively well,' he reminded his staff. 'But we only just survived the second. If there's ever a third, I don't want to be propaganda minister.'²⁹

The Sport Palace speech was never forgotten. It marked a turning point in Goebbels' career but not in the war effort. 'After Stalingrad,' he reminded Hitler in July 1944, 'I proclaimed total war. . . . But it remained only superficial.'³⁰ He had worked off many private complexes in the speech, and settled many old scores; he had referred to 'a certain social stratum' which was interested only in preserving its almost peacetime lifestyle. National Socialism heeded neither class nor profession. 'It's

time to put an end to bourgeois pruderies,' he had said, and: 'It's time to take off the kid gloves and clench our fists.' His speech had also referred to the idle classes who 'loll[ed] around in stylish bars' with no greater concern than the welfare of their stomachs. Not surprisingly after this speech the middle class suspected Goebbels of planning to eliminate them, and Berndt had to issue a discreet denial during May.³¹

Total war remained however a chimera. Goebbels closed down some stores and restaurants, about half the newspapers, and the *Ruhleben* racetrack; he banned manicures, pedicures, and permanent-waves.³² Even so General von Unruh reported that they would not meet the new manpower target.³³ What happened was often a parody of total war. Magda, convalescent and dizzy, was put to work in the Telefunken factory, but none of the other ministers' wives followed suit. Goebbels patriotically laid off his domestic staff, including his treasured chef; Ribbentrop, his arch-enemy, snapped them all up for his own expanding household.³⁴ The inertia produced by easy earlier victories proved impossible to dispel. Goebbels shut down Rothe's, the exclusive flower shop where Emmy Göring shopped, but every other luxury flower shop and eating place seemed to have its protectors. Professor Morell saved the Stadtkrug restaurant in Vienna by a word in Hitler's ear.³⁵ Göring pleaded for Horcher's restaurant. After Goebbels had sent in hired thugs to smash its windows the Reichsmarschall posted two policemen permanently outside; Goebbels phoned him at the Obersalzberg and threatened to use his powers as gauleiter; Göring retorted that his Luftwaffe would in that event take over Horcher's as an exclusive officers' club.³⁶

The Reichsmarschall seemed however to be Goebbels' only hope of neutralizing the incompetent Committee of Three (Lammers, Keitel, and Bormann). Speer flew down to the Obersalzberg on Sunday February 28 to suggest that Göring reactivate the moribund Reich Defense Committee. He phoned Goebbels later that afternoon to come down too and at four P.M. on Monday Goebbels was driven up the hairpin bends to Göring's villa. The Reichsmarschall received him wearing what the propaganda minister wearily described as a somewhat baroque costume—'But that's how he is, and you've got to take him foibles and all.'³⁷ They needed his name, his authority, his clout; but no more.

For five hours they wrangled until everybody agreed to let bygones be bygones—Goebbels dismissed their past differences with a wave of the hand. Göring bellowed with laughter when he heard of Goebbels' run-in with Unruh. Cunning as a fox, Goebbels intimated that it was everybody's duty to rally round the Führer at this time of crisis. But he also left Göring with no illusions that like him the Reichsmarschall was up to his neck in blood. ('I am in,' Shakespeare's King Richard III had moaned, 'so far in blood, that sin will pluck on sin. . . .') 'Göring,' dictated Goebbels the next morning, 'is quite clear about what threatens us all if we go soft in this war. . . . Above all we have committed ourselves so far in the Jewish problem that for us there is no escape any more, none whatever.' The same would go for Himmler, whom Göring promised to win over too.³⁸

March 8, 1943

SIN WILL PLUCK ON SIN 425

With Göring's backing secured, Goebbels took the sleeper back to Berlin that night, March 1, 1943. Churchill's bomber squadrons got there before him and Göring's stock temporarily slipped again. Berlin's death-roll from this one raid topped six hundred.³⁹ One bomb had fallen two hundred yards from the Goebbels home in Schwanenwerder; he decided to bring his children to No. 20 Hermann-Göring Strasse, where they now had the deep shelter. Many officials, particularly Goebbels' deputy gauleiter, had lost their heads; inadequately drilled in civil defense, thousands had crouched too long in their shelters while buildings which could have been saved burned to the ground. Several plunderers had been caught: They lost their heads too (as Reich Defense Commissioner, Goebbels had the power of life and death in Berlin).⁴⁰

War had a brutalizing effect. Watching rescue operations S.S. Obersturmbannführer Eichmann found one elderly couple crushed beneath girders, whimpering to be put out of their agony; he told his corporal to oblige.⁴¹ At a wrecked hospital Goebbels looked on as the bodies of patients and nurses were pulled out of the rubble; he too swore revenge, enraged at the thought that 'some Canadian thug' could do this to his city. After the British next hit Essen, the S.D. reported that many people were asking about when Germany would begin hitting back. Speer confided that powerful new secret weapons were in production, and Goebbels began hinting at them in his speeches.

When he arrived at Hitler's HQ, now at Vinnitsa in the Ukraine, on March 8 he found everybody livid with Göring.⁴² For hours the Führer let fly about the Luftwaffe's useless commander-in-chief and his corrupt entourage of high-living World War One cronies—they were all currently shopping for looted art works in Italy. As Hitler went on to discuss Rosenberg's talents and Goebbels' propaganda offensive against bolshevism,⁴³ further disastrous news came: British bombers had struck at ancient Nuremberg. Goebbels tried hard to salvage the absent Reichsmarschall's reputation—he phoned Nuremberg and assured Hitler that the damage was less than feared—but in vain. 'Given the prevailing mood,' he dictated to his secretary afterward, 'I consider it inopportune to raise the question of Göring's political leadership with the Führer. Now is not the right time.'

Göring was missing from the next total-war conference that Lammers called in the chancellery on March 16. Goebbels took Speer, Ley, and Funk to see him for three hours on the seventeenth, but he seemed totally out of touch with reality. He was astonished when Goebbels told him that 616 people had died in the latest raid on Berlin.⁴⁴ He agreed to ask Hitler's consent for the revival of the Reich Defense Committee.⁴⁵ But Hitler was in no mood to listen. He wanted only to hear that the Luftwaffe was hitting back at Britain; when he came to Berlin for Memorial Day Goebbels proposed that they take out London's wealthier suburbs one by one, rather than those of the working class.⁴⁶

Meanwhile Berlin and other cities, particularly in the Ruhr, would just have to bear the onslaught. Many a hardened soldier on home leave soon

wished that he was back on the battlefield. Even Count von Helldorff pleaded to be posted to an S.S. unit; Himmler ordered him to stay in Berlin.⁴⁷

'COUNT von Helldorff,' Himmler had been notified in January 1943, 'is very often questioned by Dr Goebbels about the evacuation of the Jews, and about communism and other political affairs in Berlin.'⁴⁸

Talking with Hitler into the small hours of January 22, Goebbels had again badgered him to let him get on with ridding the city of its Jews. It had become an obsession. He devoted twenty-six percent of his speech of January 30 to attacking the Jews.⁴⁹ His staff instructed field offices to link them closely to the concept of bolshevism.⁵⁰

So far, seventeen thousand of Berlin's Jews had gone. The trains began heading for Auschwitz, the most brutal of all Himmler's slave-labor camps and the one with the highest mortality rate. Working closely with the S.D., Goebbels planned one final sudden sweep for the night of February 27 when the remaining Jews would be rounded up and held, ready for deportation in trainloads of two thousand at a time.⁵¹ He set himself the target of evacuating the very last Jews by the end of March. During his total war speech he had called them the incarnation of evil (he had said that neither foreign protests nor crocodile tears would deter Germany from 'the exter—', he began, then checked himself and continued, 'the neutralization of Jewry'). On the day after the speech, February 19, one thousand more Berlin Jews were shipped to Auschwitz. 'Experience goes to show,' he dictated cynically a few days later, 'that a movement and a party which have burned their boats fight more ruthlessly than those which still have an avenue of retreat.'⁵²

The police bungled their swoop on Berlin's Jews. Goebbels had arranged to use the loyal units of the S.S. Leibstandarte to cordon off factories while police seized their Jewish labor force for deportation. 'Misguided' fellow Germans, wrote Goebbels, had however tipped them off and four thousand slipped through his fingers. 'We'll get our hands on them yet,' he added.⁵³ For several days there was chaos, compounded by the horrific air raid of March 1, as the manhunt for missing Jews went on. In the first six days of March five more trains left for Auschwitz (carrying 1,736, 1,758, 1,732, 1,143, and 662 Berlin Jews). 'War is no time to be sentimental,' commented Goebbels.⁵⁴ But there was widespread public disquiet at the continuing manhunt, especially after the air raid, and unfortunate scenes outside one Jewish old folks' home where crowds intervened on their behalf: Goebbels professed distress at the tactless timing.⁵⁵ He told the S.D. to go easy for a few weeks. After one more transport, of 947 Jews to Auschwitz on March 12, the operation was halted for five weeks.

Widespread damage had however been done. General Dittmar remarked that public concern was growing about Hitler's military leadership, about the air raids, and about the Jewish problem.⁵⁶ It did not surprise Goebbels that most of the hate mail after the total-war speech

1943

came from Jews.⁵⁷ A significant number of letter writers protested about his picking on the Jews, and some even saw a poetic justice in the air raids on Nazi Germany.⁵⁸

As more than once before he sought absolution from his Führer. After seeing him on March 8 at Vinnitsa he again noted for the record that Hitler had endorsed his plans to rid Berlin of its Jews. There was much the same diary entry after Hitler phoned him on the fourteenth, and on the twentieth he noted how pleased the Führer, visiting Berlin, had been when he told him that a large part of the Jews had now gone.⁵⁹ The war had, agreed Hitler, enabled them to tackle a number of thorny problems. In mid-April however Goebbels found his city once more seemingly 'overrun' with Jews claiming exemption from deportation. He ordered a thorough screening. 'I am convinced,' he dictated, 'that by ridding Berlin of the Jews I have achieved one of my greatest political goals.'⁶⁰

GOEBBELS' chronic ailment, eczema, had returned. He tried to rest out at Lanke. Magda returned to her clinic and remained there, bedridden and despairing, for several weeks.⁶¹ She began drafting her will; once she joined her husband out at Lanke, but he found the melancholy of the Brandenburg landscape getting him down. Morell's assistant Dr Richard Weber gave him a course of the hormone treatment Homoseran and the eczema began to go.⁶²

Round-the-clock bombing by the British and Americans had now begun, giving him a headache which no jabs could cure. The British rained fake ration cards on the cities too.⁶³ True, Germany had still lost only sixteen thousand dead in the raids, but they eroded Nazi prestige and they added to Goebbels' workload as chairman of the inter-departmental committee which directed relief operations.⁶⁴ He had accepted this post in January as a stepping stone to power; now it was proving anything but a sinecure. Among his proposals was one that the most heavily bombed cities be granted the right to wear the Iron Cross in their coat of arms.⁶⁵ He also had to suppress inopportune song-hits. The radio band was no longer allowed to play 'I Dance in your Arms right up to the Skies.'⁶⁶ Once Fritzsche boasted in a broadcast that despite the latest raids on Essen the Krupps works was still working flat out. The bombers returned, and Goebbels got the blame.⁶⁷

THAT April he made a well-publicized tour of Essen. On the way over Göring's deputy Milch, who had spent two traumatic weeks on the Stalingrad front, remarked that if *he* had been Paulus he would have disobeyed Hitler and brought the Sixth Army out to safety.⁶⁸ Disobey Hitler? Goebbels—for the record—disputed the very notion in his diary, but it clearly gave food for thought. His mother also told him about growing public dissatisfaction with their commanders.⁶⁹ Conversely, captured Russian soldiers' letters provided evidence of the enemy's high morale. Stalin's slogan—'Better to die on your feet than survive on your

knees'—had taken root, nurtured by the brutality of the Nazis in the east.⁷⁰

There were thus fundamental problems that Goebbels needed to discuss with Hitler, still recuperating from the winter's strains on the Obersalzberg.

He set off for Berchtesgaden late on April 11, ostensibly for a manpower conference called by Göring with Speer and Ley.⁷¹ The next morning however he learned that Hitler would not see him, pleading lack of time.⁷²

Goebbels took this snub very hard; he declared that he would leave at once, and ducked the Göring conference. He dictated a petulant note in his diary that he must have an entire afternoon with the Führer. He masked his injured feelings with a real or imaginary kidney-stone attack. Ley, taken in (again), sent a posy of hand-picked flowers to the train. Morell was summoned to inject morphine; aboard the rattling train Werner Naumann administered two more shots during the night. The minister had the train halted some distance from Berlin's Anhalt station so that nobody would see him alighting, and he took to his bed moaning with pain.⁷³ Still sulking, he refused to allow the stockpiled 'Adolf Hitler is victory' posters to go up for the Führer's coming birthday.⁷⁴ By the fourteenth the illness had passed; although an X-ray examination had found nothing, he toyed with taking a cure in Dresden or Karlsbad.⁷⁵

At the end of the month he was still angling for that audience with Hitler, but Bormann kept fobbing him off again. He had a healthy respect for Martin Bormann and recognized his inherent weakness in his dealings with him. Once over lunch he accurately described him as 'a primitive OGPU type' like the Russians who had escorted Molotov to Berlin in 1940; two days later he warned his staff never to repeat what they heard him say at table.⁷⁶

April 4, 1943

49: The Katyn Massacre

UNTIL the spring of 1943 two broad streams had carried his propaganda message out to the world, antisemitism and anti-communism.¹ In April 1943 these streams converged in the forest of Katyn, near Smolensk. 'The great surge in antisemitic propaganda,' Fritzsche would testify, 'only really began after Katyn.'² After murdering many thousands of Polish officers and intellectuals in the Katyn forest in 1940 Stalin's secret police had planted trees to conceal the graves. Locals had tipped off the Germans in 1942, but it had taken until now for the ground to thaw.

Two months earlier Goebbels had remarked that 'ghosts were coming to life' as other Soviet atrocities in Latvia were revealed.³ In March 1943 Moscow had begun a serious dispute with the Polish exile government in London over their countries' future common frontier.⁴ It was now that the German troops uncovered at Katyn the mass graves of thousands of Polish prisoners of war, their hands crudely bound with barbed wire, expertly executed by the Russians by bullets in the nape of the neck. The first such grave yielded 4,143 victims.⁵ On April 4 an S.S. Unterscharführer reported that they had already found the corpses of a Polish general, senior staff officers, a bishop—and diaries.⁶ The letters and diaries in the corpses' pockets had expired, like their authors, in April 1940 when the Russians controlled the region. 'Once again,' dictated Goebbels, 'one sees how the Jews work hand in hand, and what Europe may expect if it ever falls into the hands of the eastern or western denizens of this subversive race.'⁷

Goebbels acted swiftly and shrewdly. He briefed his staff at his April 8 morning conference that he was sending neutral journalists and Polish community leaders with captured British medical officers to witness the opening of further mass graves.⁸ Berndt, his finest propagandist, had now returned from Tunisia: Goebbels put him in charge. By April 13 twelve thousand rotting corpses had been exhumed.⁹ 'One dare not think what would become of Germany and Europe if this Asiatic-Jewish torrent ever burst upon our country and continent,' wrote Goebbels after seeing the film footage.¹⁰ He ordered his editors to feature Katyn two or three times each week. Undeniably embarrassed by the discovery, Moscow alternately called the graves 'ancient burial grounds' and blamed the Nazis.¹¹ Shocked by the revelations, the Polish exile prime minister General Wladyslaw Sikorski appealed to the International Red Cross

to investigate Katyn; Stalin broke off diplomatic relations with him.¹² Goebbels was dizzy with pride at this unexpected triumph of his propaganda. Katyn was suddenly a threat to Churchill's carefully constructed grand coalition. The British prime minister (that 'vassal of the Jews')¹³ did as Goebbels himself would have done: He thrice denied all evidence of Soviet culpability for the massacres. When a British plane-crash shortly killed off the inconvenient Polish prime minister Sikorski—the pilot survived—Goebbels found still further grist for his pernicious propaganda mills.¹⁴

The success of the Katyn revelations in a Germany long saturated with anti-Soviet atrocity propaganda was only limited. Editors soon tired of carrying the story. The public profoundly mistrusted the revelations. One reaction cited by the S.D. was that they had no right to get worked up since the Nazis had liquidated far more Poles and Jews than had the Russians.¹⁵ One minor annoyance was when German ammunition was found in some of the graves, probably part of the pre-Barbarossa deliveries to Stalin.¹⁶ When still more Soviet mass graves were found at Vinnitsa, the people commented: 'We also ruthlessly wiped out all opposition elements in the east.'¹⁷

IN Nazi-occupied Poland the impact of Katyn was equally disappointing.

Goebbels had tried for months to settle his differences with Hans Frank, but the uproar caused by Himmler's anti-Jewish measures rendered all coherent propaganda work impossible.¹⁸ Over lunch on May 9 Hitler and Goebbels agreed that Frank had lost control, but there was nobody fit to replace him.¹⁹ As anti-German incidents multiplied, Frank blamed the S.S.; on May 26 Himmler disclosed to him that he was going to evacuate the last 250,000 Polish Jews regardless.²⁰ When Goebbels again suggested Frank's replacement in June, Hitler exonerated the Governor-General: 'He has to extract food supplies, prevent the unification of the people, ship out the Jews and yet at the same time accommodate the influx of the Jews from the Reich.'²¹

According to the propaganda minister, Hitler ordered him to link the Jews directly to Katyn.²²

At the end of April Goebbels composed another major assault on the Jews for *Das Reich*. In this he argued that the Jews had wanted this war. The warmongers in London and Washington were all Jews, as were the Soviet secret police and commissars.²³ 'It is therefore a matter of state security,' he explained, 'for us to take certain steps in our own country.' This was now a race war, in which the Jews aimed at the destruction of the German people. The Jews had always been criminals, he continued: 'The Jews have not enjoyed such remarkable rewards because they are cleverer than non-Jews, but because they operate by a different code of ethics.' Hitler's January 1939 prophecy was ineluctably coming true. 'One day the same punishment will be meted out to Jews worldwide as they are suffering in Germany today.' 'There is no place for sentimental considerations,' he emphasized. 'When they hatched their plot for the total

1943

destruction of the German people they were signing their own death warrant.²⁴ Newspapers around the world quoted surprisingly freely from the article, and he took this as proof that many people in every editorial office thought like him.²⁵

Despite the apparent implicit admissions in the article, when his press officer showed him foreign allegations about 'Gestapo extermination camps' in Poland, where Jews and others were being gassed and cremated, Goebbels dismissed them as 'sensationalism.'²⁶ Nevertheless Bormann notified every Reichsleiter and gauleiter including Goebbels in July that Hitler did not want public discussion of any 'overall solution' (*Gesamtlösung*) of the Jewish problem. 'It can however be stated,' Bormann informed them, 'that the Jews are under confinement and being given appropriate employment.'²⁷

Goebbels knew different. In the first six months of 1943 fourteen trains had carried 14,620 of his city's Jews to Auschwitz. Over thirty-one thousand Jews had now been expelled from Berlin by the joint efforts of Goebbels, Speer, and the police.²⁸

THROUGHOUT these months the Nazi propaganda policies in the eastern territories were chaotic. In occupied Poland there was the usual conflict between rival Nazi agencies. Propaganda was run from Kraków by a capable civil servant, Oberregierungsrat Wilhelm Ohlenbusch, but he was permanently at loggerheads with Hans Frank's press chief Dr Gassner, an Otto Dietrich appointee.²⁹ Gassner had replaced the once independent Polish press with gutter publications which included pornographic Polish-language magazines whose explicit purpose was to undermine family life and thus destroy Polish society; conversely Gassner prohibited the importation of the 'healthy' publications produced in Germany under Goebbels' fiat, like *Mother and Child*.³⁰

As for the Soviet Union, right up until February 1944 Goebbels bickered with Rosenberg, Bormann, and the tiresome pedant Lammers over jurisdiction.³¹ He pleaded for a far-reaching proclamation designed to win over the Russian peoples. He was in no doubt that a slogan that the Germans were fighting the bolsheviks and not the Russian people would significantly aid the propaganda battle.³² Hitler flatly opposed this: His view was that they could hardly seize the Russian peasants' last cattle at the same time as wooing them for support.³³ Knowing that Hitler and Himmler vehemently opposed it the German army did not back Goebbels.³⁴ Several times he resolved to discuss the issue with Hitler, only to lose courage when he faced those steely blue-gray eyes.³⁵

So the unproductive bickering with Rosenberg continued.³⁶ Rosenberg demanded that Goebbels shut down Taubert's eastern propaganda unit. 'It's perfectly obvious,' Goebbels wrote to Hitler, 'that I as propaganda minister should have responsibility for all propaganda throughout the Reich.'³⁷ The finance ministry cut off all his funds for propaganda work in the east.³⁸ When Bormann conveyed his protests to the Wolf's Lair, Hitler—after further delay—agreed that all propaganda *should* be in one

Feb 144
hand, and he signed a decree to this effect in August, allowing Goebbels to attach a propaganda field office (*Reichspropaganda-Amt*) to each Nazi governor in the east.³⁹ But time was already running out: By the time they were in place (and then only in Minsk, Riga, Reval, and Kaunas)⁴⁰ it would be February 1944, and the Nazi dominion was coming to an end. Goebbels blamed Rosenberg. 'Now we've missed the bus,' he sourly observed in February 1944.⁴¹

Their unsettled policies toward the captive lieutenant-general Andrei Vlasov further illustrated this rift at the top. This renegade Russian offered to raise an army of fellow prisoners to overthrow bolshevism in Russia. Goebbels backed him; again Himmler and Hitler did not.⁴² When Hitler did grudgingly allow the project to go ahead, it was purely as a dishonest propaganda ploy.⁴³ Goebbels' radio stations thereupon took up Vlasov's cause. After hearing one such broadcast on his automobile radio in July, Himmler wrote, 'I forbid the S.S. once and for all to fall in, in any way whatsoever, with the entire bolshevik-Vlasov act which the Wehrmacht are staging and which the Führer has so clearly rejected.'⁴⁴

On the very next day the Soviet government established near Moscow the mirror-image of the Vlasov movement—a Free Germany Committee under the communist writer Erich Weinert.⁴⁵ Its members were a ragbag of captured German officers, Jews, and other émigrés; its first manifesto was signed by Goebbels' old sparring partners in the Battle for Berlin, Walter Ulbricht and Wilhelm Pieck. Two months later the Russians formed a renegade League of German Officers—primarily those captured at Stalingrad like General Walter von Seydlitz.⁴⁶

Stalingrad had deeply afflicted German morale. The relatives of the one hundred thousand missing German soldiers had been dismayed by Goebbels' revelations about the fate of the Polish prisoners in Soviet hands.⁴⁷ The slew of nightly British raids on the Ruhr, coinciding as they did with a drastic cut in the meat ration, further eroded morale. Moreover the German submarine campaign was in disarray as the British introduced new radar devices.⁴⁸ Germany was passing through a trough in the waves, said Goebbels; but the waves seemed to be getting ever taller.⁴⁹ Women shoppers in Berlin were heard openly cursing this 'damned war.'⁵⁰ They inveighed against Göring, and sometimes even against Hitler. Goebbels wished that he could persuade these two to speak, or at least to pay their respects in a Ruhr city. Limping down Wilhelm Strasse with Dr Naumann after dining with Hitler in May he spoke pointedly of the need to install a clear political leadership at home.⁵¹

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Speaking alone with Goebbels in his private quarters in the chancellery, Hitler again—allegedly—suggested they whip up more antisemitic propaganda as a smoke screen. Goebbels pointed out that it already accounted for eighty percent of their overseas broadcast output. The virus was already implanted throughout Europe. Antisemitism was steadily rising overseas, and Goebbels was proud to take the credit.⁵² Turning to the bombing war, Hitler ruled out copying the Japanese example of executing captured Allied air crews. The Allies would shortly have a hundred

1943

thousand more German prisoners, taken in Tunisia, and this probably influenced his decision. He was sick of war, he told Goebbels. He longed to take off his field-gray uniform and become a human being again. He was sick of his generals too: They were all liars, disloyal, reactionary, and hostile to National Socialism.⁵³ Goebbels will not have disagreed.

THE imminent final loss of North Africa faced Goebbels with the problem of explaining how Field Marshal Rommel had been spirited out of Tunisia to safety two months before.⁵⁴ Over tea with Goebbels and Berndt, a dispirited and embittered Rommel said that the Italians really were useless as fighters.

Italy was clearly the Allies' next invasion target, with Sicily particularly at risk. Abwehr chief Admiral Canaris however boasted to Goebbels that he had recovered from a corpse washed ashore in Spain a secret letter to General Sir Harold Alexander revealing that the Allies would invade Sardinia.⁵⁵ Goebbels—like Hitler—suspected a British plant, and they were right. He did not know what to make of the pink-faced and flabby-fingered Abwehr chief. At Colonel Martin's pleading he had first met Canaris a month earlier.⁵⁶ Flourishing a sheaf of papers Canaris claimed to have correctly predicted the strength of Soviet armor before Barbarossa and the site of the Allied invasion of North-west Africa in November 1942. 'Despite all the assertions,' dictated Goebbels, unconvinced, 'our political and military Intelligence just stinks.'⁵⁷

IN the middle of May 1943 the last Axis positions in Tunisia were overrun. As with Stalingrad, Goebbels had prepared an impressive radio ceremony to cushion the bad news. Hitler forbade the broadcast. Goebbels made no secret of his irritation.⁵⁸

To set the loss of North Africa in perspective he wrote a clever leading article entitled 'With sovereign calm.' 'A victory of initially only the barest significance can turn out to be decisive in a war,' he argued, 'while one that has been contested over immense areas and at the cost of many men and much material may soon pale into insignificance.' Let nobody claim that the loss of North Africa was on the same historical plane as Britain's expulsion from Europe at Dunkirk. 'For years,' he scoffed, the Allies have committed their entire armed might—to capture what is in effect just barren desert.' 'We have suffered a setback at the periphery,' he conceded, 'but the center of our war effort remains totally undamaged.'⁵⁹

This was an unfortunate turn of phrase, as Churchill was now raining explosives and fire bombs on Hitler's cities night after night. Goebbels pronounced once more that it was the British who had started this bombing of civilians. It was casuistry—true or false, it hardly mattered. Essen, Dortmund, Düsseldorf, and Duisburg were ravaged within days. Sometimes a handful of Mosquito bombers, each armed with a one-ton sting, left a trail of sirens across Germany that drove twenty-five million Germans into their wet and stinking air-raid shelters.⁶⁰ In one daring low-level raid the heavy bombers breached several Ruhr dams.⁶¹ The

121 | deluge drowned seven hundred people. Goebbels learned that the British were saying that a Jewish émigré had master-minded this raid.⁶² On the evening of May 21 Speer, Ley, and Funk came to see him. They all agreed that the country was in the grip of a 'Göring crisis'—an implicit criticism of Hitler too for tolerating the indolent Reichsmarschall.

c5 | In *Das Reich* on May 30 Goebbels lectured his readers on 'The nature of crises.' Was it not Schlieffen, he asked, who had remarked that a battle without a crisis was just a skirmish? Just as a man who survived an illness felt a new urge to live, a nation too must sense 'the healing power of crisis.'⁶³ And so his silver prose ran on—column after column of clever dialectics. But he could not fool everybody all the time. Still resting at the Berghof, Hitler checked the speech which Goebbels proposed to deliver on June 5. Where the minister had written *when victory is ours*, Hitler crossed it out and inked over it, 'when this struggle is over.'⁶⁴

| THE speech, to Berlin munitions workers, was his first devoted to the enemy raids. 'There is only one thought in the mind of the entire German people,' he said, 'and that is to repay the enemy in his own coin.' He spoke of his tour of the Ruhr cities: 2,450 people had been burned alive in Wuppertal on May 29. 'One day,' he promised, 'the hour of retribution will come.' He then launched into a fresh diatribe against the Jews.⁶⁵

Compounding his problems, both he and Magda were ill. Magda had spent several weeks in hospitals undergoing a painful operation on her face; her trigeminal nerve was playing up.⁶⁶ The surgeon had botched the operation, and the minister sent her off to the White Hart clinic in Dresden to recuperate.

Infuriatingly, his own eczema had returned. Professor Morell's assistant Dr Weber treated Goebbels with multivitamins, the muscle tonics Tonophosphan and Cortiron, and with injections of Morell's proprietary liver extract; the latter gave the minister three days of excruciating headaches. 'The Reich minister now has so many pockmarks and scars,' Weber advised Morell, 'that injections are virtually impossible.' In mid-July Dr Weber reverted to his own Homoseran injections. Finally cured, Goebbels gave him two thousand marks, a radio set, and a signed photograph as a reward.⁶⁷

Magda stayed in Dresden until August. Goebbels sent his young and personable chief aide Dr Werner Naumann, who had just turned thirty-four, to join her there on sick-leave.⁶⁸ Leaving Hadamowsky or Fritzsche to run the ministerial conferences—the participants hung around outside swapping blasphemous jokes about Hitler and their minister—Goebbels spent Whitsun out at Lanke alone, recovering from the eczema.⁶⁹ With Magda away, some things had not changed. One evening a sentry detected a pretty girl cycling inside the perimeter fence and apprehended her: At which an angry figure limped out of the trees ahead. Volubly cursing the soldier, Goebbels took charge of his young female guest, an actress whom he had invited round for the evening.⁷⁰

As Düsseldorf, Bochum, Oberhausen, Cologne, and Krefeld were

June 1943

devastated by two-thousand-ton raids during June, Goebbels ordered newsreel teams to capture the harrowing scenes for the archives. Dr Gutterer thoughtlessly included some of the footage in one week's newsreel. The screen images of mangled, headless infants and bulldozers tipping bodies into pits were so terrifying that Magda and the children burst into tears at the preview. 'If these pictures have this effect on my National Socialist family,' shrieked Goebbels at his next conference, 'just imagine the utter panic in the public!' 'Whoever let that through understands as much about propaganda as a cow about the quantum theory!'⁷¹ Colonel Martin asked Magda about her husband's callous behavior toward his staff. 'If he talks with the children for longer than a couple of minutes,' she replied with a sigh, 'you can be sure that eventually they will all be in tears. They just can't take his brand of mordant sarcasm.'⁷²

Guided by increasingly accurate radar, the enemy's bombers were pulverizing the Ruhr. Goebbels followed them around, speaking in city after city in an undeclared personal campaign for Hitler's succession. He ordered cities to evacuate all non-essential personnel—old people's homes into ancient castles and monasteries, entire schools to provinces remote from the enemy's airfields.⁷³ Over the next months he issued 157 civil defense circulars covering every aspect of the new warfare from the procurement of excavators for digging mass graves, the escorting or burial of enemy bomber crews, and the use of subway systems for fleeing through firestorms—a new phenomenon in war—to the recovery of the air-raid dead.⁷⁴ He ordered static water tanks to be built everywhere. 'In the big conflagrations,' Berndt explained to the gauleiters, 'many people have died even after the All Clear was sounded because they lacked the water to soak their clothing and face-cloths to enable them to breathe.'⁷⁵ Speaking that day at the mass funeral of the Wuppertal air-raid victims Goebbels swore vengeance in their name, and at another rally in the Westphalia Hall at Dortmund, as the wind blew the acrid smell of a burned-out city through the building's windowless sockets, he confided to twenty thousand Ruhr workers that their scientists were working on that revenge even now.⁷⁶

In Stalingrad, he told his staff the next day, wedging his knees nonchalantly against his desk, a quarter of a million soldiers had suffered. But in the Ruhr seven or eight million ordinary people were facing sudden death each night. 'Hats off to them all,' he said. 'Magnificent!' And he snapped a flawless imaginary salute to the unseen heroes.⁷⁷

scene

June 43

JUNE 1943 was nearly over. Hitler was about to return to the Wolf's Lair in East Prussia for Operation Citadel, his tank battle against the Russians at Kursk. Before leaving he called Goebbels down to the Berghof. Comfortably surrounded by his friends and his favorite oil paintings he listened sympathetically to Goebbels' nightmarish descriptions of the air raids and assured him that he was going to speak his mind to the Reichsmarschall the next day. The damage that mattered, he continued,

was that to the arms factories; the human casualties were regrettable, but inevitable. He actually welcomed the destruction of the cities; after the war Germany would have fifteen million motor cars, most of them the new Volkswagens, and the fusty and ill-bricked cities of old would never sustain the load.⁷⁸ He spoke to Goebbels of their coming 'revenge weapons'—mysterious missiles which would soon rain down on London. He admitted that their U-boats had been thwarted, but soon they would return to their hunting grounds, equipped with noise-making decoys and top-secret torpedoes.⁷⁹

Turning to the eastern front Hitler told him he was going to make 'a few necessary adjustments' to the line which might well cost the Russians several armies. Stalin had nothing to match the new Panther and Tiger tanks. But, he admitted, he had been forced by the winter disasters to abandon his old plans to occupy the Caucasus and march into the Middle East. If the Italians deserted the Axis, Germany would fight on alone—on Italian soil. 'He no longer trusts them out of his sight,' commented Goebbels afterward. It was because of the Italian factor that he was determined not to get too embroiled at Kursk. After supper that evening he found Hitler quiet and pensive as they chatted around the open fire. Bormann's teleprinter network reported that the British had delivered another raid on Wuppertal—2,750 more people had been burned alive.

'When I see the Führer in the middle of the night on the Obersalzberg,' dictated Goebbels to his faithful scribe Otte, 'bowed down by all his cares, my love and veneration of him just grow stronger.'

July, 1943

50: The First Battle of Berlin

THE truth,' defined Joseph Goebbels that summer, 'is whatever helps bring victory.'¹ German propaganda could no longer afford the luxuries of 1940. They would have to lie and deceive to survive. The moral high ground was no longer refuge enough, when the very skies rained phosphorus and death.²

If July 1942 had brought victories on every front, July 1943 brought only adversity—in Italy, in Russia, and in the air. Historic air and tank battles raged as Hitler's field marshals staged Citadel, their classic pincer attack on Kursk. A week later Stalin launched his counter-offensive at Orel, and Hitler called off the attack.

July 43

More than half the letters addressed to Goebbels' special Berlin post-box now were anonymous, a bad sign. Many asked why Hitler and Göring did not speak or visit the bombing disaster zones—Goebbels had banned the use of 'air war zones' as British propaganda was using the phrase to legalize their raids.³ Goebbels had no inhibitions about appearing. In Cologne his fellow Rhinelanders greeted him with warmth and he responded in their native dialect. Seeing Cologne's historic High Street in ruins, he remembered Hitler's words; what mayor would have dared to demolish this historic boulevard—now a few British blockbusters had done the job for them.⁴

The night train back to Berlin stopped at Erfurt station, scene of many a tryst with Anka Stalherm. Here he received news that the Allies had landed in Sicily. He muttered unpleasant remarks about 'macaroni eaters.'⁵ He did not expect the Italians to hold out for long.

His agents had told him that the German people no longer believed in victory.⁶ He half shared that view. Visiting Rechlin, the Luftwaffe's experimental research station, he displayed an uncharacteristic pessimism to the air-force colonels and engineers who met him after dinner. 'The situation does look very fraught,' he admitted, 'and one doesn't really know *which* way things are going to go.'⁷

The time was ripe, he decided, to embark on the biggest movie epic the Reich would ever make, *Kolberg*, the inspiring story of Gneisenau's historic defense of the Baltic city under Napoleonic siege from 1806 to 1807. 'The film will fit well into the political and military landscape which we shall probably be facing when it appears,' he observed.⁸ Directed by Veit Harlan, the film cost 8.5 million marks to make, eight times the average. Shooting began late in October 1943 and continued throughout

1944; eventually 187,000 soldiers were conscripted as extras, with six thousand horses in some scenes. The city of ancient Kolberg, rebuilt on a film set outside Berlin, burned for the cameras as satisfyingly as had 'Atlanta' in *Gone with the Wind*.

During these weeks it seemed that his oratory was all that held Germany together. In mid-July General Schmundt, Hitler's chief adjutant, brought 150 staff officers to hear him. Goebbels spoke in melodious tones for two hours and without notes. 'You could have heard a pin drop,' recalled one major. 'I've seldom seem anyone so polite and charming.' The minister was dressed, he recalled, in gray trousers that were perhaps a shade too light, a double-breasted jacket that was a shade too blue, and a black and white tie that was a little too large. 'He had that dreadful limp too. But one completely overlooked all those faults, and he held one's undivided attention.'⁹

'There is no going back,' Goebbels told these officers. 'We've burned our bridges.' Developing a new theme he said that they had won their victories in 'the first half' too easily. Switching to another line he talked of how convalescents needed spiritual succor. 'Sometimes a patient owes his life to a nurse who exhorts him at the hour of crisis, "You're just feverish, it'll pass by." Obviously,' continued Goebbels, 'it would be stupid for the doctor to tell the patient how sick he really is.' Perhaps that was a tactless argument, in the circumstances. 'The Soviet Union has also survived exceptional crises,' he added wistfully. 'But at the head of the Soviet Union there is a little clique of very energetic, even brutal leaders with the determination to bring their people through.' Before he ended he warned these officers, 'This passage of arms is decisive. Let nobody think that if we get it wrong this time we can have another shot at it in twenty years' time. It's now or never.'¹⁰

The passage which his audience most vividly recalled was his analogy between their current strategic position and the moment in the 1936 Olympics when the Japanese marathon winner collapsed after breasting the tape. 'Nobody who saw it,' he said, 'will ever forget that. Why? Because here was an individual making a superhuman effort.... Over the last five kilometers he perhaps told himself, I don't care if I pass out or have a heart attack—I'm going to hit that tape first!' If, he concluded, like the traitors of November 1918 a nation did not intend to stay the course then it would do better not to begin.

'I think that did the trick,' he said to Lieutenant Wilfried von Oven, his personal assistant, afterward. 'You've got to use a lot of analogies with these people.' He threw back his head and guffawed.

The crisis in public morale could not be so easily laughed off. The British fire raids were sometimes killing thousands every night. Somebody suggested requiring everybody to wear fireproof dogtags to facilitate the identification of corpses. Shades of the Yellow Star! Goebbels shuddered and discarded the idea.¹¹

'I am afraid,' he dictated, 'that the British are about to reopen the air war with a massive assault on one German city at their next opportunity.'¹²

1943

THE FIRST BATTLE OF BERLIN 439

THAT was the uneasy mood in Berlin on July 24, 1943—a broiling-hot Saturday. Desperate for a break, Goebbels took his train down to Dresden. Perhaps Magda had divined that he was bringing her white roses, because she was waiting with Naumann on the platform in a dazzling white summer dress. Lieutenant von Oven watched with voyeurish curiosity as his minister planted a kiss on her lips.

Odd news reports were trickling in from Rome. The Fascist Grand Council there had gone into a secret conclave. The following morning's news was bad. Using new electronic counter-measures to blind the radar defenses, the British bombers had wrecked Hamburg. Hitler had withdrawn the city's heavy flak to Italy only two days before. Two hundred thousand people had lost their homes. The city was still burning. At nine P.M. Goebbels returned to Berlin to direct relief operations. Gutterer told him he had ordered fire brigades into Hamburg from all over northern Germany. But there was worse to come. At No. 20 Hermann-Göring Strasse they found the switchboard ablaze with blinking lamps. Benito Mussolini had been forced out of office and arrested; Marshal Pietro Badoglio, no friend of Germany, had replaced him. It was stunning news. Goebbels gaped at Gutterer: He ordered Naumann back from Dresden: He sank into a chair in the breakfast niche, and broke the silence finally with an expletive, '*Dreckhammel!*'—though whether the Duce, Badoglio, the monarchy, or all Italians were the animal so specified remained unclear. '*Finis Italia!*' he exclaimed after another silence.

The phone rang, Hitler ordering him to catch the five-thirty A.M. flight over to HQ the next morning. That was something. Goebbels brightened. Sitting at Oven's desk, he mimicked in a faint piping voice the Italian crowds he had seen on the newsreels: 'Duce ... Duce ... Duce ...!' Then he exclaimed, 'So now we're on our own.'¹³

Fascism in Italy had disappeared. Mussolini had been toppled—in fact by just such a senate as Goebbels had been urging upon Hitler since 1933. The Wolf's Lair hosted the next morning a meeting which was the closest to an emergency Cabinet since 1939. From all over occupied Europe the planes flew into Rastenburg, disgorging onto the runway Himmler, Guderian, Göring, Speer, an ailing Ribbentrop, and the naval commander-in-chief Admiral Karl Dönitz. Rumors swept Germany. Some said that Göring had fled or been shot. Heinz Guderian confided to Goebbels his own misgivings about the war. Goebbels listened attentively (but assured his diary that the general was an 'ardent and unconditional' supporter of their Führer). Both men felt it was time to start parleying with the enemy.¹⁴

Hitler's eyes however glinted with a sudden determination. He talked about dropping a paratroop division onto Rome to arrest the king and Badoglio. Ribbentrop, shocked at the possible repercussions, and even Goebbels, whose awe of the catholic church had never really left him, talked Hitler out of a plan to smoke out the Vatican as well.

Rommel, flown in from Greece, urged that any military operation be carefully thought out. Goebbels sided with Hitler, feeling that they would

wait?

achieve more with less by striking instantly.¹⁵ With the issue still unresolved, he flew back to Berlin on the twenty-seventh. Gutterer, Martin, and Hadamowsky met him at Tempelhof with his corpulent chief of staff Gerhard Schach. Radiating false confidence he assured them (untruthfully) that Hitler had taken all the necessary decisions: 'Unfortunately I am not at liberty to tell you what they are.'

Goebbels spoke of his puzzlement at Canaris' failure to give any warning of Mussolini's overthrow.¹⁶ 'I am not having anybody "arresting" me,' he said. He stowed a 6.35 millimeter pistol in his desk, and set up an in-house machine-gun company for the protection of the ministry.¹⁷ 'Against whom? The summer air was clammy, he could hardly breathe, and nobody spoke their true feelings any more.

27-
28
AS a distraction from the worsening news he had his two eldest girls, Helga and Hilde, brought into Berlin. That night, July 27-28, over seven hundred British bombers dropped a further 2,312 tons of bombs on Hamburg creating a firestorm as the entire center, tinder-dry in the summer drought, caught fire. There was no escape from the holocaust. Twice Goebbels phoned Karl Kaufmann, the Hamburg gauleiter, one of their best: 'We've got fifteen thousand dead,' shouted Kaufmann, his voice cracking. (Richard Otte, taking dictation the next morning, thought that Goebbels might even have said fifty thousand.) He was talking of evacuating the whole city; Goebbels agreed, and ordered all non-essential personnel to leave Hamburg at once.

As Goebbels entered his ministerial conference at eleven A.M. Berlin's sirens sounded. He waited wordlessly for the nerve-wracking wail to die away. From time to time slips of paper were laid before him, but the American squadrons turned away short of Berlin.¹⁸

July 2
Speer said the next day, 'If the raids continue on this scale three months will see us relieved of many a problem that exercises us today. Things will slide downhill smoothly, irrevocably, and comparatively fast!'¹⁹ The raids did continue. That night the British dropped another 2,277 tons of bombs on Hamburg. Speer told Hitler that if this happened to six more cities the war would be over.²⁰ 'Things are blacker than Speer paints them,' exclaimed Milch at an air ministry conference. 'If we get just five or six more attacks like these on Hamburg, the German people will just pack up, however great their willpower.'²¹ On the last night in July Goebbels had leaflets issued to every household ordering all children, old people, and non-essential civilians to leave Berlin.²² When he addressed a panicky meeting of ministers and state-secretaries, with Hitler's sanction, in his ministry on August 2, Milch kept shouting: 'We have lost the war! Finally lost it!'²³

Subsequently Hitler agreed that Goebbels should brief all the ministers and state-secretaries like this more often, provided that he did so at the chancellery rather than in his own ministry, and provided he as Führer was consulted each time first.²⁴

It was another important step up the ladder of real power. Goebbels

1943

had even begun unconsciously prefacing his utterances with the phrase 'if I were Führer,' and venturing criticisms of their *Führung*—i.e. of what their Führer did.²⁵ He could afford to. Thanks to his air-raid relief work his popularity was steeply rising, while Göring's was in terminal decline. Nothing, remarked Goebbels, was harder to recapture than lost prestige. He had still not made up all the ground he had lost in 1938, he admitted.²⁶

RUMORS ran riot through Berlin's rapidly emptying streets.²⁷ One had it that 150,000 had died in Hamburg. Goebbels confidentially informed the gauleiters that 18,400 dead had been recovered so far; he asked them to use schoolchildren to spread counter-rumors through their parents.²⁸ Soon the whisper was that the reprisal bombardment of London had secretly begun.²⁹ In fact nearly fifty thousand people had died in Hamburg, literally incinerated inside the bunkers, torn apart by explosives, tossed into the flames by the fiery tornadoes.

With Berlin obviously Churchill's next target for saturation raids, Goebbels forced the pace of evacuation. Fifteen or twenty trains a day carried schoolchildren, infants, mothers, and the elderly eastward to safety.³⁰ There was opposition from parents and the host provinces, but Goebbels appealed to all the eastern gauleiters to display the proper 'socialist spirit' toward these people, who had often lost all they had.³¹ He felt himself like the commander of an important battle front. He intended to show the generals how to win. 'In seven years,' he told his staff, 'I earned one title, as Conqueror of Berlin. In seven weeks I intend to add another: Its Defender.'³² He was in his element. 'Grievous though it was,' he wrote to Hitler afterward, 'I never felt as good as I did during the bombing of Berlin; because all the medal-hunters got cold feet the moment the going got really tough.'³³

He did not want a blood bath in his city. The evacuation was brought under control as the party and welfare agencies struggled to get the frail and the defenseless out through the railroad stations before the bomber hordes arrived. White-painted arrows appeared at every street corner telling those who remained which way to run if firestorms broke out.³⁴ Slit trenches were dug in the streets and parks, water tanks were built, and the remaining art treasures were crated up and trucked out to safety. Removal vans carried Magda's priceless carpets and porcelain out to Lanke, followed two days later by an Aladdin's hoard of antique furniture and silver toilet articles, clocks, engraved cigarette boxes, candelabras, mirrors, and inkwells along with gold-rimmed crystal ware, and a huge tapestry.³⁵ Fearing that even the white-walled, horseshoe-shaped mansion at Lanke was a landmark for bombers, Goebbels ordered it draped with eight thousand square meters of camouflage netting.³⁶

Writing an understated article, 'A word about the air war,' in the newspapers, Goebbels called for a steadfast heart from his Berliners. 'What the British could take in the autumn of 1940—for which more than one of us admired them at the time—we must now show we too can

take,' he declared, and then turned the compliment as deftly as he uttered it: 'But just as Britain turned a new page in the air war after 1940, so too we shall turn a new page now.' The battle of Berlin, he announced, would soon be joined. 'As Berlin's gauleiter, I shall not, of course, be leaving the capital.'³⁷

In this defiant spirit he prepared his capital city for its hour of glory. First he investigated whether his own household bunker would withstand the latest enemy bombs. Architect Hugo Bartels replied candidly that the concrete was thick enough for the bombs of 1941, but they had got bigger since then.³⁸ Bartels also warned that if a firestorm broke out any papers in the safe would be incinerated along with the people in the bunker. During any alert, Goebbels dictated on the sixth, Emil the butler was to take not only the minister's briefcase but also the pistol into the bunker—following Mussolini's arrest, Goebbels intended to be prepared for anything.³⁹

Taking his immediate staff, Goebbels flew over to inspect the damage to Hamburg. As their Junkers 52 droned across the first villa-dotted outskirts there was little to be seen. 'You always tend to expect the worst,' said Goebbels, then caught his breath as the plane banked and acres of charred and lifeless ruins unfurled like a black flag from beneath the wing. Gauleiter Kaufmann, a small, spry figure, however impressed him with what he had done. 'I am convinced,' said Goebbels as they flew back, 'that we'd have won the war long ago if it was up to the party rather than the generals.'⁴⁰

WITH the evacuation of two million civilians and almost all children, Berlin was now ready. The nights were long enough for the British once more.

23

On August 23, 1943 they came, 625 heavy bombers carrying 1,765 tons of bombs, but what followed was a bomber-massacre. Under Major Hajo Herrmann the fighter defenses had developed new tactics using largely visual sightings. The British lost fifty-six bombers; 765 Berliners died, and only twenty-seven of these were children. Goebbels took it as a very personal victory. On the last night of the month the enemy came again. This time Milch had pots of magnesium blazing around the city and planes laying vapor mists across which the marauding enemy bombers crawled like clumsy insects on a fluorescent table-cloth. The Luftwaffe brought in every available fighter squadron, from as far afield as Denmark and central France.⁴¹ Of the 512 heavy bombers which reached Berlin, forty-seven were destroyed. Only thirteen Berliners died, and no children at all. Churchill had difficulty in mounting a third raid at all. On September 3 he sent 295 bombers, all Lancasters; they lost twenty after killing only 346 Berliners (one of them a child). Unable to sustain such losses (126 bombers in three raids, and many more damaged beyond repair) he called off the attack.⁴²

Coming so soon after the holocaust in Hamburg, this unexpected victory gave a palpable boost to Berlin's morale.⁴³ There were also fringe

Sept '43

THE FIRST BATTLE OF BERLIN 443

benefits as thousands of captured British airmen, Churchill's erstwhile elite, were processed through the Dulag Luft interrogation center near Frankfurt. Milch recommended throwing parties for these Englishmen with high-class call-girls—he understood that Goebbels had 'girls on hand for such purposes;' Gutterer agreed, and briefed Milch to ask the prisoners about Lord Haw-Haw, about the bombing atrocities against women and children, about the massacres at Katyn and Vinnitsa, and about the Jews.⁴⁴ In January 1944 Goebbels would ask for a breakdown of captured aircrews, to prove his theory that Churchill was using primarily Canadians and New Zealanders for his 'terror' raids (the answer has not survived in the files).⁴⁵

EARLY on September 8, 1943 the telex machines again began to rattle out disquieting rumors about Italy. At five-twenty P.M. Lieutenant von Oven alerted Goebbels that Eisenhower's HQ had announced that Italy had capitulated. At six P.M. the B.B.C. confirmed it. With difficulty Goebbels got a line to Rome. The embassy there was frankly incredulous as the king and Badoglio were still denying the reports. Shortly the switchboard lamp labeled 'Der Führer' blinked: Hitler gruffly instructed Goebbels to take the night train out to Rastenburg. He had anticipated this treachery, aided by intercepts of transatlantic phone calls from Churchill to Roosevelt which revealed the Italian plans. He instructed Rommel to invade northern Italy at once. 'You cannot break your word twice in one century,' dictated Dr Goebbels, alluding to Italy's earlier defection in 1915, 'without having a blot on your political escutcheon for ever more.'⁴⁶

A summer downpour drenched Berlin as his train pulled out at nine-twenty P.M. that evening. Since his special saloon coach had been shunted out of Berlin to safety, four regular sleeping compartments had been emptied of their indignant occupants to make room for him. Here on the train he found Professor Hofer, who was to repair the faulty surgery on Magda's jaw.⁴⁷ Hofer told him that it was vital to get Hitler to broadcast to the people.

Hitler had spent the whole of the historic previous day flying down to Zaporozh'ye to see Field Marshal Erich von Manstein, then flying back to his HQ at the Wolf's Lair. He had not retired until five A.M. Despite this and the shocking news about Italy he was poised and optimistic.⁴⁸ He sent for Goebbels straight after breakfast and bragged that he was going to wipe the floor with the Italians: He was ready to write off all of Italy south of the Apennines. In Russia too, he would fall back, building an East Wall along the Dniepr river. Finding him in such a realistic mood, Goebbels ventilated the possibility of cutting a deal with Stalin. Hitler however declined—'And quite right too,' dictated Goebbels prudently afterward to Otte, 'given the crisis in the east.' Hitler seemed more inclined to parley with the west: Surely the British must see reason eventually? Here it was Goebbels who disagreed, although he did ponder whether taking Sicily might satisfy Britain's imperialist appetite. 'Sooner

Sept 8

or later,' Goebbels reflected, 'we shall find ourselves having to lean one way or the other.'⁴⁹

For hours that day—the Wolf's Lair diary shows him lunching and dining with Hitler, and taking tea with him until nearly four A.M.—Goebbels pleaded with Hitler to broadcast to the nation. At 6:35 P.M. the next day, September 10, he finally had him before a microphone, speaking a twenty-page script down the ministry's special line to a tape machine in Berlin. Hitler's broadcast expressed concern about the 'unique injustice' done to Mussolini; but privately he was more callous. Ice-cold pragmatism, he told Goebbels, would dictate his decisions from now on. Now Germany would retrieve the South Tyrol after all, and all of Austria's former dominions as far as Venice. After a special communiqué about Rommel's success in seizing Rome—'It is,' dictated Goebbels, 'almost like the great advances of 1939 and 1940 all over'—Hitler's speech went out over the airwaves at eight P.M. The Russians were not mentioned. But Hitler did promise *Vergeltung*, revenge for the air raids.

As the days became weeks, Goebbels often expected the bombers to return.⁵⁰ Once, Beppo Schmid, commanding the night fighter corps, phoned from Holland warning that massed bomber formations were thundering eastward overhead; but their target was Hanover.⁵¹ Goebbels shifted Magda and the children out to Lanke, where his mother and sister were also living. The children went by pony cart to the local village school at Wandlitz, leading a Snow White existence with ponies, horses, rabbits, and goats crowding their brief lives.⁵² Magda's trigeminal nerve still caused her agony, but Hitler talked her out of an operation, fearing that she would be permanently disfigured.⁵³ Goebbels delved into Machiavelli, reading his *Thoughts on Politics and War*.⁵⁴

His own literary efforts were complicated by the reversal in Germany's fortunes. Preparing his next anthology of articles and speeches for publication, he found it prudent to omit several passages where his bolder predictions had now been overtaken by events.⁵⁵

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51: The White Suit Bespattered

ON the day after Goebbels' return from the Wolf's Lair, Hitler's special forces liberated Mussolini from his mountain-top prison. Goebbels was initially dismayed, fearing that the Duce's reincarnation would thwart their revanchist ambitions in northern Italy. The communiqué was however a welcome boost to morale.¹

There was a second boost when Otto Dietrich announced that they were about to throw the American invasion forces back into the sea at Salerno. (They didn't.) Coupled with a spate of recent death sentences and the absence of air raids these announcements had a steadying effect.² Goebbels assessed that the low marked by Hamburg had been passed.³ He took stock. Air-raid damage by the end of September 1943 had already cost thirty-two million marks; but the final replacement of damaged cities, factories, roads, and railways would cost about one hundred and twenty millions.⁴ Germany had lost 72,000 dead in the air raids; but they had evacuated around 3.9 million civilians to safety.⁵ Others were put out of harm's way by more radical means: Goebbels noted with approval that the ministry of justice speeded up the execution of all condemned prisoners to avoid their escape during air raids.⁶

The invasion battle at Salerno took a sudden turn for the worse after the Allied warships brought up their big guns. In a barrage of phone calls to the Wolf's Lair Goebbels protested that once again it was he whom the enemy were mocking for one of Dietrich's gaffes.⁷ Hitler invited him back to his HQ and, pacing up and down his map room until 3:40 A.M., he unburdened himself of many a private thought—including his suspicion that Mussolini might actually have been planning to double-cross them in July.⁸ He revealed that Admiral Dönitz already had 120 submarines back at sea, equipped with new radar detectors and torpedoes. He also revealed details of new secret weapons to be ready in January, including a high-speed pilotless flying bomb carrying a one-ton warhead and a ballistic missile weighing fourteen tons. Perhaps, he conjectured, all these would bring Britain to her senses. Goebbels again raised the topic of secretly negotiating with the enemy, pointing out that Germany had never yet won a war on two fronts. Hitler responded that, if only the Russians did not have the upper hand right now, Stalin would still be a more likely prospect than Churchill. At Field Marshal Wilhelm Keitel's sixty-first birthday celebration later that evening Goebbels noted that Hitler was far less frank to his generals. The Führer also said that

victory would go to the side which kept its nerve the longest. 'The more strongly the wind howls,' Goebbels dictated in his 144-page diary entry for this day, 'the more obstinately the Führer leans into it.'

Before parting, Goebbels cunningly persuaded Hitler to receive his arch-enemy in the High Command, Major General Hasso von Wedel, chief of Wehrmacht propaganda. He banked on Hitler taking an instant dislike to this pot-bellied, indolent Epicurean. He wished he could cook Otto Dietrich's goose as effectively. *Sept 23*

26

He was confident that he and Hitler were growing together again. At the Wolf's Lair on October 26, 1943 they spent the whole day side by side from Hitler's first morning stroll until his nocturnal tea party ended at 3:30 A.M. the next day.¹⁰ His rival Rosenberg would see Hitler soon after—for the last time.¹¹

THREE days later Joseph Goebbels turned forty-six. He ordered the ministry's evening courier limousine to ferry three ladies of his choice out to join his family celebration at Lanke, and to bring a score of foreign movies for their delectation.¹²

His existence at Lanke was almost too idyllic. Each morning S.S. Sturmführer Rach drove him in the large dark unmarked Mercedes into Berlin, taking the Prenzlau highway rather than the more obvious autobahn, with a carload of detectives behind.¹³ They returned between six and seven P.M., and Magda lined up the children with their butler Emil, a forty-six-year-old six-footer, standing behind them in his livery. To Goebbels it was often too quiet out here. One Sunday he said with a sigh, 'Three days like this in a row and I'd go raving mad.' He needed the pumping adrenaline, the blinking lights on the telephone console, the burden of life-and-death decisions, the Machiavellian intrigue. He probably even needed the hatred of his enemies. He saw them everywhere—not only in Ribbentrop, and Dietrich, and Rosenberg, but in Hans Lammers for example, a member of the *ancien régime* who seemed dangerously interested in becoming Reich chancellor. 'I'll find enough allies,' predicted Goebbels to his diary, 'to put a stop to that.'¹⁴

The British press dropped strong hints that Berlin's ordeal was about to resume. The Luftwaffe generals assured Goebbels that this time the enemy would lose thirty or forty percent of their planes each night.¹⁵ Goebbels was ready. Speer's engineers had excavated half of Wilhelms Platz next to the Kaiserhof hotel and built a deep underground command post for Goebbels as gauleiter. They had also strengthened 110,000 basements throughout the city to provide rudimentary shelters for three million people, with space for seven hundred thousand more in bunkers in the city center.¹⁶

The American day-time bombers were also becoming more active at long range, but bloody losses at Schweinfurt and elsewhere still kept them at a respectful distance from Berlin. From the interrogations of captured American aircrews, Goebbels deduced that many were homesick and few had wanted to fight Germany.¹⁷

The British night bombers were still the greater danger, and not every city was as well prepared as Berlin. Using German émigrés—the very people whom Goebbels had hounded out of Germany—to broadcast confusing orders to the defenses, the British concentrated 444 heavy bombers on Kassel on October 22: 380 dropped their bombs within three miles of the aiming point, a colossal concentration which unleashed Germany's second firestorm. Sixty-five percent of the city was destroyed.¹⁸ Goebbels arrived there on November 5 to investigate the disaster. The local gauleiter Karl Weinrich turned up late at the freight-yard where the minister's train was forced to halt, then drove off downtown in a heated, armored limousine; Goebbels followed in an open-topped Volkswagen with the local police chief at his side.¹⁹ Much had been done to prepare Kassel for air raids, but not enough: In other cities the gauleiters had ordered basement connecting-walls torn down to provide tunnels of escape in the event of firestorms. Weinrich, the worst type of good-time gauleiter, had done nothing even to evacuate the children.²⁰ Goebbels harangued the party dignitaries in the still undamaged city hall. 'I expect that you realize, *Mister Weinrich*,' he concluded sarcastically, 'that the British can be blamed for only a fraction of the five thousand dead in Kassel—including a thousand children.' (The death toll from the firestorm rose to eight thousand, nearly six thousand of them killed by carbon-monoxide fumes.)²¹ Goebbels had Weinrich dismissed immediately from the party and from all his offices.²²

Hartmann Lauterbacher, the young gauleiter of Hanover who drove them up the autobahn to his city, was all that Weinrich was not. He had prepared his city well, with shelters big enough for thousands, underground command posts, water tanks, and mobile kitchens. In the thick of one raid he had led police and soldiers through the blazing streets to rescue four thousand civilians entombed in a bunker and in danger of asphyxiation.²³

These latest raids taught Goebbels and his men a lot for Berlin. He issued instructions that bunkers had to have wider exits and be built in open spaces (he withheld from the public the gruesome details of what had happened inside Hamburg's superheated bunkers).²⁴ On the same date he forbade military honors for the burial of bomber crews, deeming funeral music, graveside salvoes, and official wreaths inappropriate accompaniments for the burial of 'mass-murderers.'²⁵

THE Russian advance gathered momentum. The Dniepr line was breached. The Red Army retook Katyn. Goebbels resigned himself to Soviet claims that the Nazis had themselves carried out the Katyn massacres. 'In fact,' he conceded, perhaps referring obliquely to the fate of the Jews whom he had expelled, 'that's one problem that's going to cause us a lot of difficulty in future. The Soviets will indubitably take pains to find as many such mass graves as possible to pin onto us.'²⁶ Putting Nazi officers on trial in Kharkov the Russians alleged that they had used 'gas vans' for exterminations. Tackled by Fritzsche about these allegations, Goebbels

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22

promised vaguely to ask Hitler and Himmler about them.²⁷

He certainly asked Hitler more often now about striking another deal with Stalin. He shared Himmler's nervousness about Ribbentrop's 'lack of flexibility' in foreign policy. He clutched at every straw. When Moscow informed Washington that they were insisting on the Polish-Soviet border that Hitler had agreed to in 1939, Goebbels hoped that this was an overture to Berlin.²⁸

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43
AIR raids had killed ten thousand more Germans during the month of October 1943.²⁹ Over Berlin however the night skies were still silent. After three weeks of quiet, Goebbels mused, one tended to forget all about air raids.³⁰ November brought blankets of low cloud, fog, and drizzle across the city—these probably closed down the enemy bomber airfields too. If the bombers stood down until February or March 1944, Germany's secret weapons should be ready. Ley told Goebbels that the boffins at Peenemünde expected to have them operational by late January; young professor Wernher von Braun had boasted that his rocket missiles would turn the tide of the war against Britain.³¹

As the nights drew in, Goebbels wondered every evening whether the bombers were coming back. He began to haunt his new two-story command bunker under Wilhelms Platz. From here, thirty feet below ground, he could follow the invading bomber streams and watch as Schach and the men of the S.A. brigade Feldherrnhalle, their uniforms distinguished by red tabs and piping, plotted the damage reports on a perspex wall map of Berlin.³² Every household now had fire-buckets, syringes, sand boxes, fire-beaters, shovels, sledgehammers, and axes at the ready. Count von Helldorff would be in charge of the fire-fighting. The air-raid wardens had been drilled. Every man in Berlin knew what to do if the firestorms came.

Goebbels had to leave Berlin for three days for the twentieth anniversary of the Munich putsch. He listened with half an ear to General Jodl's lecture to the gauleiters, and with no interest at all to Göring's.³³ For Goebbels, the highlight was a dinner alone with Himmler. They talked about security operations in Berlin.³⁴ The People's Court and military tribunals had crushed some unrest in Berlin caused by the last air raids. Lieutenant-General Paul von Hase, the city's Prussian, monocled commandant, told Goebbels on the fifteenth that he had condemned a dozen officers to death; Goebbels persuaded him to commute some of the sentences.³⁵

Still the bombers had not come. Altogether Goebbels' evacuation measures had reduced the city's population by some two million, to just over 3,300,000.³⁶

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FROM late November 1943 the British bomber commander Sir Arthur Harris—the mass murderer, as Goebbels called him—now really did attempt to repeat in Berlin what he had achieved in Hamburg. The city's outline on the radar screens was unmistakable, with its hundreds of lakes,

canals, and rivers. In sixteen air raids until the spring Harris would commit over nine thousand heavy-bomber sorties against this 883-square-mile city, with the stated aim of killing as many of its inhabitants as possible, using the most refined tactics that human ingenuity could devise.³⁷

Flanked by special squadrons carrying electronic jamming equipment, approaching stealthily behind showers of aluminum foil while decoy squadrons dropped marker flares and feinted away to the north and south, the leading squadrons of Harris's main bomber force arrived over Berlin late on November 18. Seen from the ground it was a frightening spectacle as the first waves of Pathfinder Lancasters arrived above the clouds, their engines' roar filling the horizons, and suddenly lit up the night sky with flares, followed by deadly displays of aerial pyrotechnics colored in red, green, or yellow to indicate the different aiming points for each wave. The searchlight beams probed and flickered, and silent flashes high above the clouds showed that the 'eighty-eights' and the 105-millimeter heavy gun batteries defending Goebbels' city were engaging their first targets.

That first night only fifty or sixty of Harris's bombers ventured all the way into Berlin's airspace. Damage was negligible. The city's morale, astonishingly, soared. It was like wearing a new white suit, said Goebbels, who ought to know: You were terrified of the first mud-splash until it happened—after that you took the rest in your stride.³⁸

Four days later, on Sunday November 22, Harris tried again. With Berlin seemingly safely shrouded in low, ramsoaked clouds Goebbels was speaking in a high school in suburban Steglitz when a slip of paper was handed to him. His face perceptibly paler, he continued but lost his thread. He had uttered only a few more sentences when the sirens started. A phone call to the Wilhelms Platz bunker told him that the bombers were already overhead. With bombs bursting all over the city he raced back to the bunker, his car twice just missing fresh craters. The bunker was filled with the clatter of teleprinters, hobnailed boots, and unattended telephones. Chain-smoking, he watched as S.A. men grease-chalked the first reports onto the perspex damage-map. The opera and the Schiller theater were blazing; the Scala burlesque, and the famous Ufa and Gloria Palace movie theaters—where Lida Baarova had been heckled in 1938—were already gone. The government district was devastated. About twelve hundred Berliners died and two hundred thousand more were left homeless, including both his mother and his mother-in-law—the home they had been sharing in Flensburger Strasse flattened by a two-ton block-buster bomb.

For the first time in years Goebbels had no time to dictate a diary.³⁹ The next evening the sirens sounded again. He rode out the attack in the command bunker. Incendiaries hit the state theater and the Reichstag building, but both blazes were extinguished. The Kaiserhof hotel—another historic station in his *via dolorosa*—caught fire and collapsed onto the bunker's entrance. Gutterer, on duty at the propaganda ministry,

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saved that building almost single-handed. Goebbels called in fire brigades from as far away as Hamburg. He appealed to Potsdam for troops to fight the fires. The army had an emergency plan called Valkyrie; Major-General Hans-Günther von Rost, chief of staff of Third Army district, gave it a dry run and sent in not only infantry but tanks as well; at two A.M. Goebbels angrily phoned Rost's superior, General Kortzfleisch, to order the tanks off the streets before foreign journalists saw them.⁴⁰ He asked what the devil was going on: In July 1944 he would find out.

It was four A.M. before he got back to No. 20 Hermann-Göring Strasse. The house was a sorry sight, its windows smashed but otherwise intact. He went down to the sleeping cabin in his family bunker—its light-paneled walls embellished incongruously with priceless paintings including Rembrandts, Spitzwegs, Rubens, and Giotto's also sheltered from the inferno outside.

Magda was already there. 'One of the wildest nights of my life,' he dictated the next morning, referring to the raids. 'But I think we came out on top.' He woke to a searing headache and the smell of burning. There was no power, heating, or water; he could neither wash nor shave. He groped his way out of the bunker by candlelight. Sixty thousand troops, conjured up seemingly from nowhere by the army, were already clearing the streets and railroad tracks. He dictated a proclamation to the Berliners, and since there were no newspapers he had a million copies handed out at communal feeding centers.⁴¹ His ministry was stone-cold and, like his official residence, windowless. Momentarily disheartened and needing fresh faith, he did what Churchill did—he had his chauffeur Alfred Rach drive him into the worst-hit areas and let the crowds throng round and slap him on the back. He spied one old crone making the sign of the cross over him and chanting a blessing, and he did not even take that amiss. He heard one shout of 'Plutocrat!' as his limousine bumped past, from somebody who may not have recognized him.⁴²

Seventy-five percent of the city's labor force turned up for work that day. That was not bad. As dusk fell the sky still glowed red. Beppo Schmid's monitoring posts heard the bombers preparing to take off but bad weather intervened. Goebbels drove out to the totally undamaged Schwanenwerder peninsula: Their house was warm, the phones here and the radio worked, and there was hot water in the bath. This third attack had taken eight hundred lives, and there were now four hundred thousand homeless, but morale was still high.⁴³ The B.B.C. claimed that up to forty thousand had died in the two latest raids. Goebbels allowed them their belief.

Lunching with him in the badly damaged chancellery, Lammers told him that Hitler had ordered all the ministries to stay put. Dr Goebbels was to set up an Air War Inspectorate to prepare every city in Germany for a similar ordeal.⁴⁴ The early symptoms of another raid again fizzled out that night.

As munitions minister, Albert Speer was more visibly shaken by the

Na 143

raids when he lunched with Goebbels on Thursday the twenty-sixth. It was not just that his ministry had been totally burned out; Berlin housed one-third of the Reich's electrical engineering plants, mainly in the Siemensstadt suburb. He warned Goebbels that their V-weapons would not now be operational until March. 'They keep dropping back,' noted Goebbels.⁴⁵

At first that night the British seemed to be making for Frankfurt, but that was a feint and their bomber formations suddenly turned north to Berlin. The Alkett plant and two more of Berlin's finest opera houses were hit. Alkett's, the only assembly plant for the assault gun, produced one-quarter of all tanks other than the Panther and the Tiger, and nearly half of all field artillery. Without hesitation Goebbels ordered Count von Helldorff to save Alkett's. 'Tanks are more vital than operas right now,' he told Schach, and pushed the button on his console to tell Hitler of his decision.⁴⁶ Three more times he phoned Hitler that night. Beppo Schmid reported that they had shot down a hundred of the attacking bombers, and this raid had killed only eight Berliners. Through his propaganda channels Goebbels however spread the whisper around the world that Berlin was finished.⁴⁷

He felt like a hero. The next day he addressed the entire Reich Cabinet. After he had finished telling them of the battle, they gave him a standing ovation. The last time that had happened was in 1933 when Hitler pulled Germany out of the League of Nations. His star was finally in the ascendant. Going behind Ribbentrop's back he began sending regular commentaries on foreign policy to Hitler.⁴⁸ He spent all day with the Führer again on December 19.⁴⁹ 'I was able to join you at headquarters more frequently than ever this year,' he wrote him afterward. 'These visits have given me far more than you, mein Führer, could possibly divine.'⁵⁰

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A FIFTH raid had hit Berlin with over two thousand tons of bombs on December 2. Forty more bombers had been destroyed. Grimly fought and with no quarter given on either side, the battle of Berlin continued all winter. While Goebbels directed the city's civil defense, Magda handled the tide of public queries and complaints. Her files contain harrowing letters from mothers robbed of their children, and from widows of party 'martyrs'—she had looked after their needs ever since 1934; she controlled a small account from which she judiciously dispensed welfare (N.S.V.) funds to those in need, often asking local party agencies to make discreet inquiries first. ('Subject frequents pubs and tobacco stores,' she might be told; or 'Miss A— has seven illegitimate children, not just three as she claims.') Her advice was always tactful. When women asked whether to baptize their infants, Magda, who had baptized none of hers, replied quoting Frederick the Great—'Blessed be each in their own way.' Her replies could be uncompromising too. A Miss Charlotte Goebel, who had lost everything in the November air raids and wanted only to return to her native—and remote—Danzig was informed: 'In all such

cases where blitz victims with employment here have deserted Berlin, Mrs Goebbels has refused any aid whatsoever and they have had to return to their workplace in Berlin.⁵¹

28 Addressing a youth film festival on November 28 Dr Goebbels warned the *britischen gentlemen* that they would never score an 'easy, cheap, and totally unmilitary' victory. The British were hoping to win by a war of fire and flame against women and children. 'In the name of the citizens of this capital, and in the name of the entire German people, let me give them this reply. Never!' To rising applause he announced: 'In Germany today there is no more urgent demand than that we pay back the criminals on the Thames with added interest for what they have done to us.' Day and night, he promised, this reprisal was being prepared. 'When one day retribution comes, and it's the British people's turn to hurt, then we shall weep not one tear for them.'⁵²

A few days later he harangued two score German air attachés seated around a long table at his ministry; rapping his index finger on the table he taught them about the rift that must come between the Allies, and compared Germany's situation now with the Nazi party's on the eve of power. He brooked no discussion afterward, but silently shook each officer's hand on leaving. 'You had the feeling,' wrote one, 'that Mephistopheles himself had just shaken hands with you.'⁵³ Writing in *Das Reich* Goebbels struck an upbeat note. 'When the skies darken and there is scarcely a gleam of light,' he wrote, 'then the people's gaze turns unbidden to the Führer. He is the rock in the surging seas of time.'⁵⁴

'ANYTHING in the air?' Goebbels would now ask Lieutenant von Oven before retiring to bed. If an alert sounded, Oven would let him sleep and dial the minister's extension, 2-4, only after the bombers had reached Mecklenburg. 'About twenty minutes, Herr Minister!' After a while Goebbels would appear in the bunker, immaculately dressed, his tie perfectly knotted.

Göring meanwhile had left for France, sent there by Hitler to prepare revenge raids against London. Before he left, he asked Goebbels to find another word for *catastrophe*—it injured his vanity each time he saw convoys of trucks labeled 'Catastrophe Relief' dashing to the latest bombed city.⁵⁵

At Christmas Goebbels did crack, but only briefly. His adjutants had arranged to show an American movie at Lanke, but Magda had set up her Christmas tree slap in front of the screen. Goebbels threw a tantrum and stormed back to Schwanenwerder, thirty-five miles away. Angry and depressed, he sulked there, glowering over a book of Schopenhauer throughout the festivities.⁵⁶ Reviewing the year in his diary he decided it had been one run of bad luck after another. The British called again, 656 bombers this time laden with death and destruction, if not 'catastrophe,' even now. He reached the command bunker just as the flak batteries opened fire. Afterward he drove over to Neukölln, a working-class district which had been hard hit. The people joked with him, cursed the British,

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and even shouted 'Heil Hitler' as he left. 'Who ever would have thought that possible of our Neukölln workers,' he exclaimed to Otte.⁵⁷

In fact the Allies now discovered that recently captured German prisoners like those from the battleship Scharnhorst had more confidence in victory than ever. 'We must win,' said one, simply, 'and therefore we shall win.' One Viennese-born Luftwaffe lieutenant termed Goebbels' emphasis on 'strength through fear' particularly effective.⁵⁸ 'Butcher' Harris, as he liked to be known, had under-estimated the Berliners. His first twelve raids had killed 5,166 people and destroyed one-fifth of the available housing; but Speer's arms output in Berlin was actually increasing.⁵⁹

Visiting the Wolf's Lair Goebbels found workers again strengthening the bunkers. Sixteen feet of reinforced concrete would henceforth protect Hitler, three times the thickness of the gauleiter's air raid shelter in Berlin.

52: When the Going gets Tough

WE do not know how long this war will last,' admitted Goebbels in his broadcast on the eve of 1944. 'It would be idle to speculate.'¹ To the party faithful he dictated a new slogan: 'Everything is possible in this war except for one thing—that we ever capitulate.'²

On this he and Hitler saw completely eye to eye. During their ten recorded meetings in the course of 1944 they never seriously discussed suing for peace. Goebbels invariably returned to his ministry with his engines recharged by contact with Hitler. To the end of his life he felt totally inferior, even intellectually, to him. 'My dear Naumann,' he would say to his closest aide, 'right now I don't know what the Führer is planning. But I am convinced that he will see us through.'³ On this occasion, in the first days of January 1944, they examined a map of London and picked out the most rewarding targets for their rockets and flying bombs. After three undisturbed years, the British were in for a dreadful awakening, Goebbels commented to his staff afterward. 'There's no defense. No warning. Bam!—It just smacks into the unsuspecting city.'⁴

Months would first have to elapse. When Göring launched several conventional raids on London in January, Goebbels forbade newspapers to use the word *Vergeltung* (retribution) or even to adopt tones of triumph or satisfaction.⁵

Responsibility for the civil defense of all of Germany's cities gave him the cachet that he had until now lacked when speaking to high-ranking officers. 'Some of you,' he told three hundred officers assembled for Nazi indoctrination courses in Posen on January 25, 'might well say, a fat lot you people back home know! But, if we disregard for a moment the misery that the enemy's terror raids have inflicted upon us, I am happy about them in one respect: That I can now speak to you, not as a desk-warrior but as the representative of a multi-million-inhabitant city that has been through catastrophes unparalleled by anything that has gone before in history.'⁶

The British were putting out reports, still not denied by him, that up to a million had died in their raids on Berlin.⁷ On January 28 Churchill sent 596 bombers to unload 1,954 tons of bombs on the western and south-western suburbs. Reuters agency admitted that the British were trying to burn down whole districts.⁸ Among the buildings destroyed this time were the Nollendorf and state theaters.⁹ One hundred thousand

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more Berliners lost their homes, and forty-six more bombers were shot down. The next raid, on January 30, was the heaviest yet: 489 planes dropped 12,961 tons of bombs. Goebbels surfaced from his bunker to find the doors and windows at Hermann-Göring Strasse blown out. He idly traced a swastika in the mortar dust that covered his desk—then brushed it irritably aside.¹⁰

scene

When he drove around the city a few days later the trams and subways were running again, and eighty-five percent of the labor force was already back at work. At Mariannen-Strasse, where a building had pancaked, he watched rescue operations for a while and spoke with weeping survivors until hope for their families was abandoned. He began to fear that Berlin's morale was indeed cracking.¹¹

Unquestionably, it called for moral fibre—or many feet of concrete—to stay on in Berlin. Goebbels asked Hitler to award the highest medals for bravery to Berlin's top officials Gerhard Schach and police chief Count von Helldorff.¹² He pinned the decorations on these close friends on February 9. 'I have found my colleagues in Berlin to be worth their weight in gold,' he dictated. 'For the most part they are veterans of the years of struggle, utterly loyal, and willing to go through thick and thin with me.'¹³

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On the fifteenth Beppo Schmid warned that the bombers were again heading for Berlin. This time Göring also phoned, to say that he had given the flak artillery a free hand. Goebbels had time to bath and dine before the sirens sounded; 806 bombers bore down on his city. The 2,643 tons of bombs they dropped were widely scattered, but one demolished the Hotel Bristol, killing all but eight guests.¹⁴

The city's ordeal was almost over. The British losses were steadily approaching unacceptable limits. On February 19, a crystal-clear night, they lost seventy-eight out of 730 bombers raiding Leipzig. Eyes smarting from smoke and fumes, and head aching from 'bunker sickness,' Goebbels again toured the bomb-ravaged streets of his capital. Hitler made no attempt to emulate him, either now or later.¹⁵

THE Allies might have the bigger bombs, but the Nazis still believed they had the better cause. Addressing the senior officers' indoctrination course at Posen on January 25, Goebbels suggested that their ideology compensated for the material supremacy of their adversaries. 'In the heavy raids on the Reich capital,' he told them, 'six hundred thousand lost their homes in two consecutive nights.' Just one such raid in 1918 would have brought the war to an end. 'If I say that at the end of such an ideological conflict there will be only the survivors and the dead,' remarked Goebbels opaquely, 'this should not be taken as meaning that the inevitable outcome will be the utter physical extermination of this or that section of the population.'¹⁶

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This Goebbels speech is worth mentioning if only because on the next day Himmler spoke bluntly to the same audience about the fate of Germany's Jews.¹⁷ When he announced that they had totally solved the

Jewish problem, most of the officers applauded.¹⁸ 'We were all there in Posen,' recalled one of them, a rear-admiral, 'when That Man told us how he had killed off the Jews. . . . I can still recall precisely how he told us: If people ask me, "Why did you have to kill the children too?" then I can only say, "I'm not such a coward that I leave for my children something I can do myself."¹⁹

Goebbels was not one of Himmler's audience, but he learned of a strange episode which happened the next day at Hitler's HQ. Unsettled by the pernicious influence of the propaganda spewing forth from Moscow from the Seydlitz traitors, Hitler tried to inspire these same officers with talk of the coming new secret weapons. 'If the worse comes to the worst,' he then said, 'and if I am ever deserted as supreme commander by my people, then I shall still expect my entire officer corps to muster around me with daggers drawn. . . .' At this moment Field Marshal von Manstein, one of Goebbels' *bêtes noires*, rose and called out: 'And so it will be, mein Führer!'²⁰ It was an interpolation of painful ambiguity. Hitler initially took it as a compliment; so, when he read the transcript, did Goebbels.²¹ But he shortly realized that it was in reality a 'stupid interruption' designed to provoke.²² For weeks, fumed Goebbels, Manstein had been demanding permission to retreat before the Soviet onslaught. Between every line was however the field marshal's real message to Corporal Hitler: This is your war, not mine—let's see how your vaunted military genius gets you out of this mess. 'Our generals want defeats,' he exclaimed. 'Not defeat—not even they are as blind as that.'²³

Defeat still did not seem inevitable, when viewed from No. 20 Hermann-Göring Strasse. Addressing the gauleiters assembled in Munich on February 23 Goebbels reported that despite the thirty to forty percent destruction of Berlin, arms output had actually increased. The flying bomb should begin operations early in April, followed soon after by the rocket missile.²⁴ 'The Germans are still pinning their hopes on *Vergeltung*,' dictated Goebbels, worried. 'People are vesting far greater hopes in it than they are actually entitled to.'²⁵ He again prohibited any official use of the V-word but he promised the gauleiters that there would be reprisal raids.

Over dinner on the twenty-eighth Hitler's adjutant Schmundt discussed with him their problem-generals. 'They're as thick as thieves,' he growled. Goebbels suggested that as during the Gregor Strasser crisis of 1932, when the gauleiters had sworn loyalty to Hitler, all their field marshals should sign a loyalty declaration now. Goebbels dictated a suitable text, and Schmundt left at once to tour every battle front, beginning with the HQs of Rommel and Rundstedt in France, to collect the field marshals' signatures. Fully aware of his own unpopularity among the generals, Goebbels advised him not to disclose that he was the author of the declaration.²⁶

IN an article published in January 1944 entitled 'In ninety days' Goebbels

March 144

predicted that the Allied invasion would come within that space of time. It was a leaf from Churchill's propaganda book. If nothing happened, he could claim that the Allies had failed. The Americans alone would suffer half a million casualties, the article prophesied. 'On the German side,' he added, 'they will find army commanders confronting them who have already triumphed once in the west, and who tossed the British back across the Channel in a sorry state ... And above them all stands a Führer who laid France low in six weeks.'²⁷

Visiting Hitler's Berghof on March 3, he found that Eva Braun had enlisted the help of her lady friends to distract Hitler from the grimness of fighting a losing war. One eye grotesquely bloodshot from a burst blood vessel, Hitler disclosed that he was soon going to invade Hungary; he asked Goebbels to gear up his propaganda machine accordingly. After disarming Hungary's army, he said, they could tackle her aristocracy and Jewry. As soon as he had smashed the coming Allied invasion, he added, he was going to switch forty divisions to the eastern front. Sooner or later the Allies would have to start talking to him. Meanwhile he had delayed their *Vergeltung* until the second half of April, rather than shoot his bolt too early. Beefing up the little Doctor's own morale Hitler portrayed the colossal firepower of the panzer divisions with their new Panther and Tiger tanks. He promised that their fighter planes' heavier armament and new radar would foil the enemy air offensive in the coming winter. Göring was a wash-out, he admitted, but it was their duty to help him. 'He can't stand criticism right now,' Hitler explained. 'You've got to watch your tongue very carefully when you tell him things.' He also forbade Goebbels to attack their Moscow traitors. 'The Führer holds our generals in utter contempt,' noted Goebbels. 'The generals ... want nothing better than to trip him up.' Stalin had done well, he reflected, to liquidate his generals early on. 'Only in the Jewish problem have we pursued such a radical policy,' he dictated, taking pride in his own historic accomplishment. 'Rightly so. And today we are the beneficiaries. The Jews are out of harm's way. Yet people told us again and again, before we tackled the Jewish problem, that there was no solution.'²⁸ Even so there were still six thousand 'privileged' Jews remaining in Berlin and he could not get at them.²⁹

See

With the tail end of 'Butcher' Harris's winter air raids still scorching Berlin not all its citizens considered it a privilege to remain. Wilhelm Furtwängler was a shining exception. He insisted on staying behind to conduct morale-boosting concerts for the blitz victims and munitions workers. 'We won't forget that after the war,' Hitler promised Goebbels. He ordered a private shelter built for the great conductor. Furtwängler graciously declined and asked that a public shelter be built in a working-class area instead.³⁰

RETURNING by train from the Obersalzberg to Berlin, Dr Goebbels had good reason to feel that his political come-back from the wilderness was beginning. It was as though he had drunk deeply of a fiery potion,

observed Lieutenant von Oven. Goebbels told his adjutants that Hitler had asked him to return within a week (characteristically, he told his diary that he would *try* to do so). Standing in the swaying corridor, hands thrust deep into his pockets, he said: 'I'm convinced that if I'd lived a generation earlier I'd have become Reich Chancellor in 1917. In times of danger the cry always goes up for a strong man.' Had not England sent for Churchill in 1940?³¹ (There was that comparison again.)

His city's daytime ordeal now began. At dawn on March 6 the early-warning radars picked up seven hundred and thirty American B-17s and B-24s leaving England escorted by nearly eight hundred fighter planes. One hundred Luftwaffe fighters engaged them over Dummer Lake, destroying twenty-three within minutes. Four hundred fighter planes began tearing at the following American formations. Forewarned by telephone, Goebbels stood on the terrace of his lakeside mansion at Lanke, sweeping the pale horizons with binoculars for the attackers. As the silvery shoals of high-flying bombers passed silently overhead, keeping tight formation, he broke into an ungainly gallop across the lawn to get a better view. He had never seen the British—they still began their lethal business after dusk and left before dawn—but here was the other enemy, crewed by airmen in leather flying-jackets emblazoned with slogans like 'Murder Inc.'³² A fighter squadron scrambled from a nearby airbase and zoomed low overhead. He waved to the pilots. He could hear distant cannon-fire as the leading U.S. formations began their bombing runs on the Erkner and Bosch factories. Puffs of smoke hung in the air where the heavy flak shells burst. One or two B-17s lurched out of station and spiraled earthward spilling smoke and parachutes. Sixty-nine went down this day, with over a hundred more crippled beyond repair. As the fearsome aerial tournament ended, Goebbels' flunkies served lunch. The family came out of the bunker, and while Magda clucked disapprovingly he described to his spellbound youngsters everything he had seen. He told them proudly that their home town was now the most heavily bombed city in the world.³³

The next American raid, by six hundred bombers on the eighth, killed only forty-nine Germans and twelve foreigners, and left a mere 1,500 homeless.³⁴ Altogether however the enemy air raids had now killed 116,000 Germans, Goebbels confidentially recorded.³⁵ He was impatient for the *Vergeltung* to begin. Hitler had ordered Speer to have the V-weapons ready by April 15 but Speer, it seemed, was recovering from depression in a clinic. Goebbels sent Naumann to visit him. Speer pleaded for a further postponement. 'Fourteen days won't bake the cakes any better,' snorted Goebbels; he suspected that Speer was getting cold feet about reprisals.³⁶

WHEN Goebbels arrived back at the Berghof at nine P.M. on March 13, Hitler flattered him by meeting him at the door. Over dinner they debated why the British were still refusing to heed the bolshevik peril. This had been the subject of Goebbels' most recent leader article in *Das Reich*.³⁷

14

'Without doubt,' observed Goebbels afterward, 'history will see Churchill ... as the gravedigger of the British empire. With his shortsighted, vindictive policies he has maneuvered Britain into a blind alley, with no way out.'

It snowed heavily all day. Up in Eva Braun's quarters the two men watched the Kodachrome home movies that she had made in 1939 and 1942. The minister noted silently how much Hitler had changed since then. He was stooped and aging. After lunch the next day he told Goebbels that he longed for the invasion to come so that he could make a clean sweep in the west and then settle Stalin's hash as well. He was even toying with the idea of weakening the west deliberately in order to lure the Allies in. Goebbels did not like that at all.³⁸ Hearing rumors two weeks later that Hitler was indeed pulling two S.S. divisions out of France, he sent Colonel Martin down to the Berghof to find out, determined not to allow it to happen.³⁹

March 1944 brought a decisive downturn in the German public's morale. The failure of the submarine war, the lack of reprisals, and the shrinking Reich frontiers all gave the lie to Goebbels' public assurances.⁴⁰ Colonel Martin returned from Berchtesgaden quoting General Jodl as stating that if the Allied invasion succeeded they had lost the war.⁴¹ Tempers in the ministry frayed. After one row, Gutterer snappily advised the minister to recommend a political end to the war before the Reich itself was destroyed. That afternoon Gutterer reappeared with Dr Hermann Muhs, the former Staatssekretär in the ministry of church affairs, and repeated the treasonable advice. The worst of it was, Goebbels knew they were right. 'Your proposals are out of line,' he retorted, and told them to clear out—'I don't want to see you again.'⁴² Lying, he told Hitler that Gutterer was unwell, and started rumors that he was involved in a newsprint-purchasing scandal.⁴³ In a little ceremony on Gutterer's birthday he formally replaced him as Staatssekretär by Werner Naumann, a truly meteoric rise for his young bureau chief, who was at that time still only thirty-four.⁴⁴

Premonitions of death occurred to Goebbels. 'I want to be buried in some open space in Berlin,' he decided.⁴⁵ The clock was already ticking. He had ordered the cable radio network to provide a running commentary to city dwellers during air raids. Insidious as a Chinese torture, the hollow tick of a radio clock now separated the air-raid bulletins.⁴⁶ It got on the strongest nerves and Goebbels replaced it with a melodious four-note jingle which he composed himself.

On April 1, 1944 Hitler appointed him city president of Greater Berlin.⁴⁷ He moved the office to the corner of Lietzenburger and Emser Strasse, and—in line with total war—reduced its payroll immediately from six hundred to fifty.⁴⁸ Vested already with sweeping powers over life and death as defense commissioner, he authorized other gauleiters to execute looters after air raids and to publicize those executions immediately.⁴⁹

On the eve of Hitler's birthday he wrote him a fawning letter and

broadcast a eulogy contrasting him with the 'parliamentary mayflies' among their enemies.⁵⁰ He closed by predicting, 'He, and not his adversaries, will be the man of the century.' His call to the Berghof at two minutes past midnight was, said Hitler, the first to reach him. Goebbels wished him 'at least thirty' happy returns. As he drove out to Lanke, their Mercedes passed a church with a tattered swastika newly draped from its ruins. 'It's the Furtwängler spirit,' he said: 'When the going gets tough ...!'⁵¹

The threat of invasion hung over all the Nazi leaders. Hitler admitted that he slept only three hours a day. His limbs literally trembled when he speculated on the where and when of the invasion.⁵² Goebbels too was edgy, though for another reason: He had to compose a leader article for *Das Reich* which events might well overtake before it appeared two weeks later.⁵³ That Easter weekend the tides were again just right. But no invasion came. Hitler reassured Goebbels that Rommel had an old score to settle with the British and Americans. 'So let them come!' dictated the minister in his diary. 'I am very pleased with the sovereign calm with which the Führer faces events.'⁵⁴ But that very phrase—Hitler's 'sovereign calm'—belied his own deeper misgivings. The public too was on tenterhooks. 'The letters I am getting,' he recorded on May 13, 'talk almost solely about the invasion. People are not only expecting but looking forward to it. They're only afraid that the enemy may not try.'⁵⁵ As April became May, and no invasion came, the S.D. reported that a sense of disappointment was setting in.⁵⁶

7+8

Twice in April and again on May 7 and 8 the American bomber squadrons struck at industrial targets in Berlin.⁵⁷ A thousand-pound bomb scarred the chancellery, but life otherwise soon returned to normal. Goebbels remarked privately that General Douhet, the much vaunted theorist of air power, had a lot to answer for. 'First it was *our* airforce generals who thought they could bomb Britain to a pulp, ripe for invasion. Now the strategic-bombing wizards are on the other side.'⁵⁸ Mounds of rubble now choked the center of his city, a breeding grounds for rats which scavenged the flooded cellars for the remains of food or flesh. Typhus cases reached epidemic proportions. Goebbels found himself suffering fierce headaches, and one morning in May a red sore appeared on his face. 'Do you think it might be typhus?' he asked his one-eyed adjutant Günter Schwägermann. A long-distance call was placed to Professor Morell in Bavaria. Morell sent round a specialist, who diagnosed a simple cold-sore.⁵⁹

Recovering out at Lanke with the children, Goebbels watched the frontiers of Hitler's Reich steadily shrinking. The Crimea was lost, and in Italy the Allies broke through at Monte Cassino. Harald Quandt's commanding officer wrote that the young lieutenant was doing well, and the minister sent cigars and cognac down to his stepson's unit.⁶⁰ Magda had serious complications with her neck glands. She saw Morell later in May when she went to spend an evening with Hitler; the doctor insisted she have an operation.⁶¹

May '44

WHEN THE GOING GETS TOUGH 461

THE American air force had now begun ground-strafting attacks in Germany.⁶² On Sunday May 21, 1944 their fighter planes, flying only a hundred feet up, machine-gunned several people in fields and streets.⁶³ (Nazi pilots had enjoyed doing the same in their heyday.) On the twenty-third Goebbels secured Hitler's approval for an article encouraging the public to lynch such airmen if they fell into their hands.⁶⁴ At midday on May 24 the Americans again bombed Berlin. Coming across a downed American bomber pilot, Second-Lieutenant James G. Dennis, that day Goebbels' propaganda director Alfred-Ingemar Berndt drew his revolver and shot him in cold blood.⁶⁵ As Berlin burned, Goebbels began drafting the controversial article.

21.

24.

It is not provided for in any Article of war [he wrote] that any soldier who commits a heinous crime is exempted from punishment by reason of superior orders, particularly when such orders flagrantly violate every human ethic and every international usage of war.

He angrily quoted from J. M. Spaight's book on air power *Bombing Vindicated* ('It is not possible to draw a dividing line between the civilian population and the combatants'), and from the *News Chronicle*. 'We are in favor,' the liberal London daily newspaper had written, 'of wiping out every living creature in Germany—man, woman, child, bird, and insect.' The left-wing British novelist H. G. Wells had echoed these words, and even the archbishop of York had officially described the bombing of civilians as 'the lesser evil.' Goebbels claimed sanctimoniously to have abstained from citing these words before lest his public take matters into its own hands and 'do unto the pilots ... as they have been doing to others.' Such compunctions no longer applied, he now suggested. 'It is asking too much,' he wrote, 'to expect us to use German troops to protect these child-murderers. ... Enough is enough.'

After checking again with Hitler he published the article in the *Völkischer Beobachter*.⁶⁶ It provoked outrage—but also apprehension—in London.⁶⁷ Ribbentrop had his press chief telephone an angry protest to Goebbels. 'This article,' the propaganda minister retorted, 'was written at the Führer's behest.'⁶⁸

Scene

GOEBBELS had lost his awe of the officer caste ever since reading of how the Spartans had borne their diminutive and crippled king Agæsilaois joyously into battle on a shield. That gave him a hero with whom he could identify. After writing the 'lynching' article he traveled down to Sonthofen castle—a Nazi indoctrination center—to speak to front-line generals and admirals.⁶⁹ Himmler had already addressed them, once more mentioning his work in killing off the Jews.⁷⁰ Wearing a dark-blue suit, he joined Goebbels, wearing the party's brown uniform, and the officers for dinner afterward.⁷¹ The text of Goebbels' own pep talk is not preserved. He did not like having to make one to officers. 'I'm just not in the mood,' he told Oven. 'I've tried telling the Führer we're wasting our time with these people.' But he found himself placed next to the

May '44

exquisitely named Major-General Hyacinth Count Strachwitz, and this officer, wearing the highest medals for valor, partly restored his faith in the officer-aristocracy.⁷²

THE evacuation of the Jews from Berlin had dwindled to a trickle, and the Jewish problem had all but vanished from his diary. He had put Berndt in charge of an anti-Jewish propaganda unit.⁷³ Other top Nazis still wanted to proselytize, taking the anti-Jewish campaign worldwide. Rosenberg suggested reinforcing their antisemitic propaganda among foreign prisoners.⁷⁴ Ribbentrop proposed setting up a phony 'Jewish' radio station to discredit all Jews everywhere; Goebbels complained to Hitler that this violated the first law of all propaganda, simplicity.⁷⁵

March 1941
Hitler's military occupation of Hungary in March had brought more than seven hundred thousand more Jews into the Nazi fold. Goebbels had noted a few days before, 'We'll take care they don't abscond.'⁷⁶ Eichmann extracted three hundred thousand for the Nazi war factories, and deported most of the rest to Himmler's camps.⁷⁷ Goebbels gloated that, based on his own experience in Berlin, once the Hungarian government had embarked on anti-Jewish policies they would find there was no going back.⁷⁸ He advised them to take care to justify their policies in the press.⁷⁹

He did not conceal his cynicism about what he meant by 'justification.' Speaking to two hundred hand-picked German government and business officials in his ministry's Throne Room in June, wearing a sober gray suit and an air of confidentiality, Goebbels reiterated his propaganda canons: Simplicity, constant repetition, and a language capable of holding the intellectuals while not losing the common man.⁸⁰ Nazi propaganda, he told this select audience, had only two themes, the dual struggle against bolshevism and the Jews. One day, when the great powers met around the conference table, the question would arise how all this had come about. With one voice, said Goebbels, all must then answer: 'The Jews were to blame!'⁸¹

June 144.

53: The Long-Awaited Day

To impress his ascetic Führer, Goebbels chose this moment in June 1944 to quit smoking (for the umpteenth time). 'A certain nervousness arises,' he dictated on the third. 'Thanks to the constant air-raid bulletins.' The Allied bomber forces shortly transferred their attentions to the German synthetic oil refineries. In Italy the battle for Rome had begun. The eastern front was quiet. Nothing had yet happened in France either. One of Rommel's men told Dr Goebbels that the invasion scare was nothing but a monstrous Churchillian bluff.¹ On his way down to the Obersalzberg on June 4 the propaganda minister spoke to fifty thousand people gathered in the ruins of Nuremberg's Adolf-Hitler Platz. 'As for all these Jewish tricks and intimidation attempts,' he cried, 'we can only say one thing: We're ready!'²

He whiled away the evening with the delectable young Countess Faber-Castell; later, at her husband's castle outside the city, Goebbels listened to her singing and accompanied her on the piano for 'A Little Melody Shall Join Us Forever.' It was 4:35 A.M. as he boarded the train onward to Munich.³ Shortly, Lieutenant von Oven brought him the latest telegrams. The United Press reported that Allied troops had entered Rome, greeted by Red Flags and communist salutes. 'Onward, Christian soldiers,' commented Goebbels sardonically to the lieutenant. 'What good was Rome to us anyway? Just two million more mouths to feed.'

Hitler still expected the invasion to come in Normandy and nowhere else. Field Marshal Rommel however expected the enemy to land between Dieppe and the Somme. 'He has told me,' reported Berndt to Goebbels after touring these defenses, 'that if the enemy manage to get ashore it won't be easy to throw them out again.' Rommel was asking for powerful subversive propaganda to be broadcast over Radio Luxembourg to the Allied troops, as in 1940.⁴ The French, continued Berndt, were eagerly helping the Nazis and being well paid for it. 'Everywhere there are shouts of Vive Rommel,' he reported. 'The population clusters around and waves to us. They march off to work singing songs.'⁵ Rommel, he said, planned to leave France shortly to visit Hitler.⁶

It was June 5 when Goebbels read this report. He believed that the invasion would come in the next five days—or better still not at all.⁷

Cars ferried them from Salzburg station up to the Obersalzberg. Morell gave him a fortifying injection before the meeting with Hitler. The Führer revealed that the two V-weapons were ready to open fire, beginning with

a salvo of three or four hundred flying bombs against London. Goebbels suggested launching them during London's rush-hour for maximum effect. Like him, Hitler feigned indifference about the fall of Rome. 'The real decision will come in the west,' he said. He blamed their setbacks in Italy on the Allies' air supremacy, but claimed there was little he could do about Reichsmarschall Göring without damaging the authority of the Reich and party.

It was the old story. 'I'm afraid,' dictated Goebbels to Otte afterwards, 'that when the enemy attempt their invasion in the west, their air force may give us precisely the same headaches as we've had in Italy.' Then an unreal optimism took over. 'Let's hope the enemy launch their invasion soon, so that we're able to turn the whole war around in the west.'⁸

Thus the eve of the historic Allied invasion of Normandy passed in idle gossip at the Berghof.⁹ They talked about Schopenhauer and how to write. Goebbels asked, in vain, for the replacement of General Paul von Hase as commandant of Berlin; they had crossed swords recently.¹⁰ He also put in a word for Colonel Martin, who had been arrested in a minor corruption scandal. Hitler revealed that he was now toying with the idea of suddenly allowing the Russians into Romania, to bring the western powers to their senses. 'He considers Britain done for,' noted Goebbels, 'and is resolved to give her the *coup de grâce* at the slightest opportunity.' He could not resist adding, 'As yet, I cannot quite see how, precisely, he's going to do that.'

If he were foreign minister, he knew exactly what he would do to play their enemies off against each other. Hitler still clung to Ribbentrop, however, calling him an ice-cool tactician, however inflexible. When Goebbels criticized Ribbentrop's bloated ministerial apparatus, Hitler replied that he was reluctant to ask the minister to scale it down in case he resigned—a *laissez-faire attitude which* Goebbels felt was disastrous under the circumstances. Strolling back from the teahouse Hitler admitted that he *had* considered replacing Ribbentrop. Surely aware that Goebbels coveted the job for himself, Hitler mentioned however that Rosenberg, of all people, seemed the only possible successor. Goebbels choked. 'That would be out of the frying pan and into the fire!' he exclaimed to Otte, and resigned himself to letting the matter ride.

Resting down in Berchtesgaden at ten P.M. he received the first indication, based on radio intercepts, that the Allied invasion was beginning.¹¹ He did not take it seriously at first. Dining at the Berghof later with Hitler and Speer there was still no sense of urgency.¹² They chatted with Eva Braun about theater and film—her favorite hobbies—then talked round the Berghof fireside of happier times. Goebbels sensed that Hitler was drawing closer to him again. It felt just like the good old days. With an unseasonable thunderstorm lashing the windows, Hitler retired at two A.M. and Goebbels went over to the Bormanns for a while. At two-thirty Goebbels phoned Rudolf Semler, his press officer, to bring any telegrams up to his bedroom at nine o'clock; but at 4:04 A.M. Semler suddenly phoned to say that they were now getting reports of airborne landings on

seem?
why?
which follows?

June 6-12, '44

THE LONG-AWAITED DAY 465

the Cherbourg peninsula, and an invasion fleet approaching Normandy.

'Thank God, at last!' said Goebbels. 'This is the final round.'¹³

HIS agencies broke the news to the world before Reuters could do so. At nine-thirty that morning Churchill, 'unable to hold his water,' as Goebbels put it, announced to the House of Commons that four thousand ships and eleven thousand planes were taking part: So this clearly was the big one. Hitler was euphoric. 'The invasion is happening just where we expected and with exactly the means and methods we've been preparing for,' commented Goebbels. 'It will be the giddy limit if we can't see them off.'

At Schloss Klessheim, Goebbels found Ribbentrop in confident mood; Göring smiling broadly—General Korten, chief of the air staff, was stripping the Reich of fighter squadrons in a long-prepared operation to switch them to the invasion front;¹⁴ Himmler was also smiling behind his wire-rimmed glasses, sure that his S.S. divisions would acquit themselves well. Two first-class panzer divisions were already rolling into action, and they were expected to be within range by six P.M. Goebbels noticed that General Jodl was reserved in his judgment, and decided to speak in their first communiqués only of a grave and historic struggle. As they left for Berlin at eight P.M., Oven noticed that his chief was quite thoughtful.

Goebbels telephoned the Berghof once during the initial invasion battle. The news was not what he had expected. The panzer divisions had not been able to counter-attack and the enemy beachhead north of Caen was already fifteen miles long and three miles deep.¹⁵

Within a few days the false euphoria at Hitler's HQ was dissipated as the enemy battleships brought their firepower to bear on the defensive positions far inland. Unable to conceal the breaching of Rommel's 'impregnable' Atlantic Wall, Goebbels' next article for *Das Reich* developed the theme that Stalin alone would profit from the invasion battle, as his enemies tore each other to pieces in France.¹⁶

Morale at home faltered. The public was puzzled that the submarines and Luftwaffe were failing to crush the invasion.¹⁷ In a cold fury Goebbels watched the first newsreel takes from Normandy. The telephoto lenses lingered on beaches where Eisenhower's landing craft seemed to block the entire waterline, gunwale to gunwale. Mist-shrouded silhouettes of battleships and cruisers crowded the horizon. Not a German plane was to be seen, and scarcely a flicker of gunfire. In the reflected glow of a table lamp Goebbels clenched his knuckles until they were white. 'Mein Gott,' he exclaimed. 'How can the Führer watch such scenes without sending for the culprits and throttling them with his own bare hands?'¹⁸

Worse followed. The New York newspapers began to jeer at the conspicuous absence of the Nazis' vaunted secret weapons.¹⁹ Late on Monday June 12 Naumann burst in, flushed with excitement. The Berghof had just confirmed that the *Vergeltung* had begun. Goebbels ordered a press clampdown—a prudent measure as the High Command shortly admitted that only ten flying bombs had actually been launched (four of these

had crashed on take-off and the 'bombardment' had been halted). On Thursday night however the operation resumed in earnest. Two hundred and forty-four of the pilotless missiles were catapulted, each cruising noisily across southern England with a one-ton warhead aimed at London. This author willingly concedes that nobody who heard the droning approach of those weapons would gainsay their ability to terrify.

At Schwarz van Berk's suggestion Goebbels called it the 'V-1.' It conveyed a hint of more to follow.²⁰ Although Hitler wanted fanfares, Goebbels allowed only a one-sentence reference in the next communiqué.

That Saturday afternoon however the *Berliner Nachtausgabe* ran a banner headline announcing 'THE DAY FOR WHICH EIGHTY MILLION GERMANS HAVE LONGED IS HERE.' Otto Dietrich had done it again. In a blind fury, Goebbels heard that people were laying odds that the war would be over in a week. He limped up and down clutching the newspaper, scored through and through with his ministerial green pencil.²¹ Forced to reverse his policy, he directed Fritzsche to broadcast that evening about the V-weapons; that night his radio stations transmitted eye-witness accounts and recordings of the terrifying organ-like roar as the missiles started out from their bases for central London.²²

ON June 19, 1944 a Major Otto-Ernst Remer, the tall, lean new commander of the Berlin guards battalion, reported to him. A brand-new Oak Leaves cluster won on the eastern front distinguished his medal bar. They saluted and shook hands—a partnership thus beginning that was to change the course of history one month later.

That day the chief editor of the *Völkischer Beobachter* reported back from the western front. The generals in Normandy, he told Goebbels, had warned him to stand by for disagreeable surprises.²³

In Goebbels' view a serious crisis was looming. Speaking with him some days earlier General Schmudt had already referred to the Allied beachhead, though still contained, as swelling like a malignant tumor. The time had come, agreed Goebbels, for 'exceptional measures,' which he defined once again as bringing in 'real total war.' Schmudt begged him to make that point at the Berghof.²⁴ He then persuaded Hitler to agree to discuss this issue with Goebbels.²⁵ To start the ball rolling the minister drafted a significant article entitled 'Are we waging total war?' Departing from his previous theme that *all* Germans must participate, this urged that power be given in a total war to 'the fanatics.'²⁶

Determined to pull no punches, he arrived at the Berghof early on a rainy, gray June 21, 1944. It was not a propitious moment. First, the American army had just cut off the Cherbourg peninsula. Second, only that morning Speer had warned that the air attack on their oil refineries was choking off their oil. Third, General Dietl, also present, now warned that Finland was about to pull out of the war. Fourth, even as they spoke 1,311 American heavy bombers, carrying two thousand tons of bombs and escorted by 1,190 fighter planes, were thundering toward Berlin.²⁷ Fifth, Hitler told him that he was convinced that a major Soviet offensive

June 22 July 4

THE LONG-AWAITED DAY 467

was to begin the next day, the anniversary of Barbarossa.

As they talked, the phones rang constantly, and message slips were handed in: Berlin was again blazing. Alone with Hitler after lunch, Goebbels launched into a three-hour debate, pleading for control over total war. They needed a Gneisenau or a Scharnhorst now, he said, not worthless time-serving soldiers like Field Marshal Keitel and General Fromm (both of whom he mentioned by name). Handled properly, the Wehrmacht could squeeze a million extra combat troops out of its bloated 'tail.' Hitler however called Fromm an irreplaceable specialist, and he defended Keitel with much the same stubbornness; true, he heaped contumely on Göring for surrounding himself with sycophants and refusing to hear home truths; but still he would not hear of getting rid of him. As for putting Goebbels in charge of total war, he rejected it outright. This was still not the right time. He proposed to muddle through as before. He comforted Goebbels with the meager promise that if, but only if, things got out of hand he would send for him. Hitler was less inclined than ever to hope for a deal with Britain. 'Britain will be totally destroyed in this war,' he again predicted. 'They've had it coming to them.'²⁸

scene

June 22

Goebbels left at seven P.M. as Berlin, a sea of flames, needed him; he realized that he had got nowhere. Even as he dictated into his diary the next morning, on June 22, the loyal commentary that 'so far' Hitler's instinct for timing had always proven right, the Soviet summer offensive was beginning—precisely when and where Hitler, against all the sober counsels of his general staff, had predicted. Goebbels watched with impotent anger as Stalin put total war to work. He had mobilized an entire nation, while the luxury-loving Germans were still spared, at their Führer's incomprehensible behest.²⁹

Within days this Soviet offensive had demolished the German army group Center. Naumann returned from a three-day tour of the sector; one glance at his map told Goebbels that their eastern front could not fall back much further. 'Bold as brass,' he grimly noted, 'the Soviets are saying that their push is aimed at Berlin.'³⁰

Ministering to the needs of posterity, he ordered the miles of horrific air-raid newsreel footage transferred to a secure location.³¹ A rash of suicides broke out among the Nazi generals. Even Rommel was in difficulties—'He has not quite come up to our expectations,' recorded Goebbels on July 4. In the privacy of his bedroom he began smoking cigarettes again; he needed tablets to sleep as well.³²

July 4

WITH Berlin sweltering in a heatwave he took a train through the bomb-flattened south-eastern suburbs to speak in Breslau on July 7. Magda was already in the Silesian capital recovering from the operation on her jaw. Hanke, the gauleiter, met Goebbels at the station. Both men had matured in the furnace of war, and put their differences over Magda behind them.³³ Hanke was about to marry the high-society divorcée who had borne him a daughter in December 1943 and Magda had developed a romantic interest in Werner Naumann.³⁴ Goebbels visited her at

July 7

the clinic; Professor Stocker had succeeded in extracting the painful nerve without leaving a scar. Husband and wife exchanged a few stiff pleasantries.³⁵

Speaking to fifty-three thousand people gathered in and around Breslau's Century Hall Goebbels warned that for Germany it was now or never. There would be no 'next time,' he said. 'If we do not throw them back now, our adversaries will erase Germany and everything German from the face of the globe.' The Allies, he continued, had reduced cities like Berlin, Hamburg, Mannheim, Kassel, Frankfurt, Cologne, and Essen to smoking ruins (Breslau was still out of their range); but they had failed to break the people's morale.³⁶ He took much the same line in his next article for *Das Reich*: 'The greatest political error that our adversaries have committed in this war is to impose on the Reich a struggle of life and death.'³⁷

The Allies listened to his message no less intently than the Silesians. 'Goebbels,' President Roosevelt learned, 'has taken and twisted the slogan of unconditional surrender and made the people feel that the slogan means unconditional annihilation.'³⁸ 'He also stresses here the theme,' the same source reported, 'which we can expect to have repeated from now on, that bolshevism is on the threshold of Europe.'³⁹

WITH Göring in disgrace, the undeclared fight for Hitler's succession began. Speer and Goebbels, ostensibly still friends and allies against Göring, jostled each other for control of total war and the supreme authority that would go with it. Leading industrialists told Goebbels that they had investigated the Wehrmacht and found hundreds of thousands of idle troops, just as he had told Hitler. But Speer too had reported this to Hitler; Speer suggested a new total war committee.⁴⁰

Speer thought he had a trump card. After lunch one day he showed to Goebbels Peenemünde's secret film of the coming rocket missile. The film left Goebbels breathless. Hitler had told him more details of this fourteen-ton projectile when they last met—it was 'like something out of the imagination of Jules Verne,' he told his staff.⁴¹ In full color the newsreel showed the bomb-proof underground factory where slave laborers were assembling the rocket engines. At a firing range deep in Poland a special rocket transporter hoisted the 'V-2' upright onto its fins. Repeated launches filmed from inside the blast-proof control bunker showed the missiles lifting off and gathering speed above the surrounding tree-tops, balanced atop a blinding white flame, and vanishing into the blue sky leaving only jagged vapor trails. Speer told Goebbels that at the height of its trajectory the V-2 was one hundred miles above the surface of their earth. 'If we could show this film in every movie theater,' exclaimed Goebbels as he hobbled out past the S.S. men guarding the door, 'the most hard-boiled pessimist could no longer doubt our victory.'⁴²

They talked until two in the morning. Speer agreed that there were a million men to spare in the economy. He suggested that Hitler would be more receptive now than when Goebbels had last ventured to speak with

July '44

him. Goebbels however shied away from another marathon debate and decided to set down his views on paper.⁴³ Interestingly, Speer again decided to get at Hitler first and submitted another paper on total war to Hitler two days later, appropriating many of Goebbels' ideas as his own.⁴⁴

There was little time to lose. Thundering hordes of tanks and men were bearing down on East Prussia. Hitler flew back to his Wolf's Lair HQ there on July 16; the army's general staff HQ, awed by the Russian approach, moved five thousand of its officers in the opposite direction. 'I'd like to turf out every cowardly man-jack of them,' snarled Goebbels.⁴⁵ The chief of general staff General Zeitzler resigned, pleading a nervous breakdown.⁴⁶

July 16

Hitler carried on regardless, unaware that the hand of history was about to be raised against him.

DATED July 18, 1944, Goebbels' memorandum on total war, which we shall examine first, was a masterpiece of advocacy. In its final form it was forty-one pages long, and phrased as a personal appeal from one of Hitler's oldest supporters. 'I have stood by you for twenty years now,' he wrote, 'and believe I have always been a staunch companion when the going was roughest.' Events of the last weeks, he said, had proved how thinly their front lines were manned. While his faith in the party was boundless, that in the Wehrmacht was 'badly shaken.' Given the right powers, the gauleiters would be able to raise vast quantities of manpower. He believed that Speer too could release more currently exempted young men from industry to the forces. 'We must act today,' he insisted, 'if we want to see results in three or four months' time.'

Germany needed a firm hand, he argued. In Berlin, each day still brought invitations to official receptions and other functions. Events had rendered Rosenberg's ministry totally redundant. Nobody would miss Ribbentrop's press office either if it was dissolved. During the winter air raids, he recalled, some government agencies vanished for weeks, but nobody had missed them. 'How primitively we worked earlier in the party,' he argued, tugging at Hitler's nostalgia-strings. The Führer himself must now give sufficient authority to 'men of backbone and character' to take charge—men not yet wearied by this war (a sideswipe at Speer, who had returned only in May from his three-month convalescence). Yet another 'committee' such as Speer was proposing would do more harm than good, objected Goebbels. 'I went along with the farce of the "Committee of Three" and would warn most urgently against any revival of it.'

After shamelessly reminding Hitler of his own achievements since 1926 Goebbels urged him to give 'a man of your confidence' the job of coordinating all the others, 'just as we, for example, have been doing highly successfully in the Reich Air-Warfare Inspectorate.' He boldly guaranteed, if given such powers, to raise fifty new divisions within three or four months, while Speer would *still* get additional manpower for his arms factories. True, the enemy would crow that the Nazis were at their

last gasp. But had not Churchill—his hero—called for an all-out effort after Dunkirk? Had not Stalin, when Moscow itself was threatened, cried ‘Better to die on your feet than survive on your knees?’ In another well-aimed dig at Speer, Rosenberg, and Ribbentrop, all authors of many a verbose memorandum, Goebbels reminded Hitler that this was the first such document he had submitted in twenty years.

With suitable contrition he added:

In the twenty years that I have been with you, particularly in 1938 and 1939, I have occasioned you much private grief. You always responded with a nobility and charity that today still fill me with deep emotion when I think of them.

‘But,’ he added after these allusions to the Lida Baarova affair and probably the Kristallnacht, ‘I believe I have brought no dishonor upon you during this war.’

In battles in Roman times, he concluded, the message was, when all seemed lost: *Res venit ad triarios!*—When the first two ranks fell in battle, he explained, it was up to the third rank, their hardest warriors, to save the day. ‘This hour now seems to have struck for the nation. . . . The people wants to do more than we are asking of it. Call in the *triarios* to fulfil the people’s wish!’⁴⁷

THE events of Goebbels’ next few days are uncertain and not easy to reconstruct. His diary entries of July 19 to 22 inclusive are missing.⁴⁸ Perhaps he never dictated them. Perhaps he did, but later ordered them destroyed. What is certain is that Goebbels’ heroic document of July 18, 1944 was forgotten amid the extraordinary events that rocked Hitler’s empire two days later.

There was an odd prelude. On July 19 a news report was telephoned from Berlin to Stockholm that Heinrich Himmler was shortly taking over all military personnel matters, currently the business of Generals Schmudt and Fromm. No sooner had this report reached Stockholm than all telephone lines from Berlin were cut.⁴⁹ It is worth recalling that the telephone-monitoring agency was Göring’s monopoly. The next day was no less crowded with the inexplicable: Field Marshal von Brauchitsch, the retired army C.-in-C., was seen being driven through Berlin in full uniform.⁵⁰ It also seems necessary to report here that General Heinz Guderian, Hitler’s formidable inspector of tank forces, knew full well what was about to happen and elected to wait outside Berlin.⁵¹ Himmler too kept well away from Berlin until later that day. The behavior even of Albert Speer, a close associate of both Generals Fromm and Wagner, also seemed odd in retrospect to Dr Goebbels. For a long time after the Twentieth of July nobody trusted anybody any more.

note - July 20, 44

54: Valkyrie

July 20, 1944

THE day, July 20, 1944, started routinely. The Goebbels ministry once again lectured outposts that the word propaganda was not to be used as synonymous with 'lies, duping the public, hypocrisy, and rabble-rousing.'¹ At nine A.M. the court martial of Colonel Martin, Goebbels' liaison officer to the Wehrmacht, began; Goebbels' enemies, who were legion, had rigged the bench to ensure that his man got a stiff sentence for corruption.² After Goebbels had presided over his regular eleven o'clock conference Speer came over to show to the Cabinet ministers assembled in the theater of the propaganda ministry some graphs demonstrating how arms output was increasing.³ Goebbels rounded off with a few well-chosen words and took Speer and Funk back to No. 20 Hermann-Göring Strasse for a chat.⁴

At one o'clock the intercom buzzed. 'Herr Minister is wanted by the Führer's HQ—Lorenz is on the line.' Heinz Lorenz was Dietrich's deputy at the Wolf's Lair. He said: 'Herr Minister, there has been an attempt on the life of the Führer. He has ordered an immediate announcement broadcast that he is alive and well.' (The radio news was Goebbels' exclusive domain.) Lorenz dictated the proposed text down the line.⁵ Goebbels had a direct phone link to the HQ via the Winterfeld-Strasse telephone exchange. Not many people were aware of that—least of all, apparently, those who had just tried to kill Hitler.⁶

Although Lorenz shortly phoned again to stress the urgency, Goebbels seemed not to grasp that point at all. He chose caution. A plot against their Führer? 'You've got to soften such a psychological shock,' he explained, and detailed Hans Fritzsche to draft a well-modulated commentary to that end.⁷ Troubled by a recurring ear-ache, he turned to other business;⁸ he dispatched a telegram of condolences to Leni Riefenstahl on the death of her father, then withdrew, evidently for his regular nap.⁹ Nothing is known about his actions for several hours.

It is true that soon after the assassin's bomb exploded at his feet at 12:45 P.M. Hitler had ordered all regular telephone links cut while Himmler and Göring were called in.¹⁰ Goebbels had his own secret line; yet he appears to have done nothing more about the news until five P.M. Did he perhaps speculate on Hitler being dead?¹¹ Was he waiting to see which way the cat jumped?

By mid-afternoon suspicion at the Wolf's Lair had narrowed to Colonel

Claus Count Schenk von Stauffenberg, Fromm's one-eyed chief of staff: He had slipped out of Hitler's conference and flown pell-mell back to Berlin. Upon arrival there he assured Fromm, General Olbricht, and their fellow plotters that he had *seen* Hitler dead. The plotters' signals began to go out at four o'clock, putting into effect the army's Operation Valkyrie, which Goebbels had already encountered after that air raid eight months before. The scenario was that recalcitrant Nazis had bumped off their beloved Führer, necessitating martial law. The city commandant General Paul von Hase ordered Remer's guards battalion to cordon off the government district, and he detailed other units to seize the radio station and propaganda ministry and arrest Dr Goebbels as one of the plotters—but in fact the biggest obstacle to any putsch in Berlin.¹²

When Remer, accustomed to obeying orders, issued them in turn to his men at Moabit one of them, Lieutenant Hans Hagen, smelt a rat. Formerly a member of the propaganda ministry and now the Nazi indoctrination officer attached to Remer's battalion, he obtained permission to ask Goebbels himself what was going on. Arriving at the ministry on a motorbike pillion at five o'clock he told Regierungsrat Dr Heinrichsdorff, an old friend, that something very fishy was going on. Heinrichsdorff brought Hagen straight round to No. 20 Hermann-Göring Strasse. Hearing of Remer's unusual orders Goebbels sprang to his feet. 'That's impossible!' he exclaimed. Floundering between panic and mistrust he asked Hagen whether this Major Remer was a loyal national socialist. He sent for Remer, then phoned the S.S. Leibstandarte, the most Hitler-loyal unit in Germany, at its barracks in Lichterfelde, and told them to stand by.¹³

Goebbels' chief of staff Gerhard Schach arrived, puffing.¹⁴ He had received a telex from Bormann at the Wolf's Lair warning all gauleiters that a full-scale military putsch was under way. At four o'clock the Wolf's Lair had monitored strange orders issuing from the war department in Bendler Strasse, with the codeword Valkyrie. (At four-fifteen Keitel had already begun notifying the Wehrmacht districts that Hitler was alive, that Fromm was dismissed, and that Himmler was replacing him—exactly as prefigured by the news flash to Stockholm the day before.) At five P.M. the plotters in Bendler Strasse were still issuing mutinous signals to army districts signed by 'Stauffenberg' and 'Witzleben'—a field marshal whom Hitler had long ago relieved of his duties. Was there no end to the treachery? Schach told Goebbels he had tried to reach Count von Helldorff, the police chief, but without success. Suspecting foul play Goebbels told Police General Wunenberg to stand by to take over, and sent for Speer.

Speer arrived hatless and more disheveled than usual. Goebbels received him in his first-floor study and briefed him on what was going on. 'I want you with me,' he said. 'We've got to act prudently.' Since he hardly consulted with Speer at all in the hours that followed it is evident that he wanted the ambitious young man where he could see him.¹⁵ Each time he phoned Hitler, Goebbels sent Speer out of the room.¹⁶ Taking

July 29 44

up position in the street below they could see soldiers in full combat gear, slung with machine-guns, ammunition belts, and hand grenades; trucks with more soldiers rattled past toward the Brandenburg Gate. Goebbels pulled his 6.35-millimeter pistol out of his desk and cocked it: 'Just in case.'

One of his staff, sent out on an errand, returned with word that a soldier had prevented him from leaving the building. Goebbels began to wonder what was keeping Remer.

Only now did he telephone the Wolf's Lair. Hitler, still shaken by the bomb blast but stoical, was meeting with Mussolini. Goebbels spoke with Julius Schaub, Hitler's adjutant, but Schaub simultaneously received an incoming call from Hitler's personal adjutant in Berlin, Alwin-Broder Albrecht. Albrecht reported that a detachment of soldiers had just tried to occupy the Reich chancellery.¹⁷ Schaub passed Goebbels on to Hitler. 'Mein Führer!' exclaimed Goebbels. 'Has the army gone mad? The guards battalion here is standing guard on my ministry. It's bad for my image, people might think I need military protection.'¹⁸

Hitler was puzzled by Goebbels' naïveté. 'Doctor,' he croaked into the telephone, 'they've tried to kill me.'

His head swimming with pain, his ear drums perforated, Hitler ended the conversation. Around 6:15 P.M. he phoned Goebbels again. 'Where's that radio communiqué?' he asked. It had slipped the minister's attention completely. He explained that he would release it as soon as Fritzsche had drafted a reassuring commentary.

'I want that out now!' shouted Hitler. Goebbels picked up another phone and screamed at Fritzsche. Fritzsche no doubt did the same, to his subordinates, because at 6:28 P.M. the German home service was interrupted with the special announcement that an attempt had been made on the Führer's life, but that he had survived.¹⁹

BY that time, as ordered, Remer had his cordons in place and General von Hase was taking steps to arrest Goebbels. Remer overheard him briefing Lieutenant-Colonel Hermann Schöne to do so.²⁰ Hase also sent a colonel to the army bomb-disposal school, commanded by a fellow conspirator, with orders to organize three hundred men into squads which would seize the radio building and propaganda ministry and arrest Goebbels.²¹ At this moment an emissary arrived from Lieutenant Hagen, who had remained with Goebbels, asking Remer to come to see Dr Goebbels at once, as a putsch attempt was under way. Hase naturally forbade Remer to go; equally naturally, Remer was at first less inclined to trust the Machiavelli of Hermann-Göring Strasse than his own commanding officer, but after wrestling with his dilemma he decided to go, while leaving instructions on what to do if Goebbels should detain him. With that decision, the putsch in Berlin was doomed.

At 6:35 P.M. Remer's car drove into Goebbels' forecourt; five minutes later he was brought up to the minister's study.²² Stiffly at attention, he explained that the Führer had been assassinated.

* Was he
prepared
to shoot
Goebbels?

'I just spoke with the Führer myself a few minutes ago,' Goebbels contradicted him. Then: 'Are you a true National Socialist?'

'Through and through, Herr Minister! But are you loyal to the Führer?'²³

Goebbels gave his word of honor. Remer was still unconvinced. Might he speak with the Führer himself?

It was about seven P.M. The call was put straight through. Hitler knew Remer personally—he had pinned the Oak Leaves on him only a few weeks earlier. 'Do you recognize my voice?' he said.

'Jawohl, mein Führer!' shouted Remer, and slammed his heels together.²⁴

'Until the Reichsführer gets there,' said Hitler, 'I am making you personally responsible for crushing any plot against the state's authority.'

Major Martin Korff, commander of a bomb-disposal company, arrived with his squad and told Goebbels he had come to arrest him on Hase's orders. Goebbels and Remer burst out laughing and enlightened the unfortunate major.²⁵ Korff's comrade Captain Alexander Maître had taken his squad to the propaganda ministry, but promptly placed his men under Remer's command instead. Remer ordered his men to muster in the garden beneath Goebbels' windows, then set off back to the traitorous Hase's HQ, telling the minister that he would phone every twenty minutes to be on the safe side. Hase however had transferred to the Wehrmacht district HQ on Hohenzollerndamm.

On General Olbricht's orders a Major Friedrich Jacob with troops from the infantry school at Döberitz had occupied the main radio building in Masuren Allee; Olbricht had ordered Jacob to report back when he seized the building. Instead, he phoned Goebbels. The latter sized up the situation in an instant and told the major to accept orders only from him. 'Nobody broadcasts without my express permission.'²⁶ Witnessing this exchange Speer marveled at Goebbels' composure. He was 'as cold-blooded as a warlord on a battlefield,' he would say the next day.²⁷ Hans Fritzsche sent two or three hundred S.S. men over to the radio building under an S.S. Obersturmbannführer. Together with Jacob they secured the building against the traitors all night and thus enabled a recording of Hitler's speech, made with a sound truck at the Wolf's Lair, to be piped through from East Prussia and transmitted nationwide at one A.M. This dealt a further death blow to the plot.

NOT for nothing had Goebbels had a company of his senior officials given infantry training after Mussolini's overthrow in 1943.²⁸ Around seven-thirty P.M. they were ordered to pick up their machine-guns and report to No. 20 Hermann-Göring Strasse. Major Remer transferred his command post from Hase's former HQ to Goebbels' address as well, a more than symbolic move. Eventually there were about a hundred and fifty soldiers trampling around in Goebbels' garden in the gathering dusk. He went

Dr. T.
— Goebbels
had two
switches
— screaming
hysteria
or ice-cold
calm. The
hysteria was
for the discharge
of needles
anxiety.
But anxiety
put him into
focus.

July 20 '44

down and spoke briefly to them, illuminated by the light flooding through the open garden door, arousing a fire of holy indignation in these elderly soldiers about the traitors in high places.

Confusion reigned in Berlin even now. When the ministry staff tried to leave their building at about eight-fifteen the soldiers still detained them. Major Rudi Balzer, Martin's successor, phoned Hase's HQ; here a Major Baron von Massenbach put him through to a Colonel Fritz Jäger, who said he was just on his way over to the ministry.²⁹ In fact Hase, making one more attempt to get his man, had ordered Jäger with two units of military police to arrest Goebbels and occupy S.S. Gruppenführer Ernst Kaltenbrunner's Reich Main Security Office; however these units also joined forces with Remer.³⁰ When a Gestapo official shortly told Major Balzer that the army was staging a coup, he was incredulous, and protested at this peddling of 'unfounded rumors' against the army.

There were unsung heroes in these confusing hours, Hadamowsky later told Goebbels.³¹ When Colonel Mertz von Quirnheim had falsely announced at Bendler Strasse that Hitler was dead, a Lieutenant-Colonel Herber, unconvinced, had sallied forth with about fifteen men for No. 20 Hermann-Göring Strasse and armed them with machine-guns and grenades; after confirming that Hitler was alive, they burst in on General Olbricht, in conference with Stauffenberg and Quirnheim, and arrested them all after a brief exchange of small-arms fire. There followed an anxious moment as Remer's troops arrived, since Herber had no means of contacting either Hitler or Goebbels to obtain their approval for of his having arrested these very senior officers.³²

Remer had ordered Lieutenant-Colonel Rudolf Schlee to contact this loyal unit at the war department building. After hearing Schlee's report, which revealed that the building was nothing less than the traitors' headquarters, Goebbels phoned Hitler and secured authority to smoke them out.³³ He told Schlee to go back and arrest 'every general.' At about nine P.M. he sent a telex to all the gauleiters—he did not state by what authority—reporting for their own information that a 'dilettantish' plot by reactionary army generals had been uncovered. 'Gauleiters are called upon to display extreme vigilance and to ensure that their organization remains effective and intact and that they preserve their freedom of action and movement at all costs. Further directives follow. Heil Hitler. REICHSLEITER DR GOEBBELS.'³⁴

At the same time Bormann, the more usual signatory for such directives, telexed to the gauleiters his theory that the 'reactionary criminal vermin' had staged the putsch in conjunction with the traitors in Moscow (he named General von Seydlitz and Count Einsiedel). Had it succeeded, he said, a generals' clique consisting of Fromm, Olbricht, and Hoepner were to have taken power and made peace with Moscow. Bormann followed with a further message at nine-forty, warning that 'a General Beck' was trying to take over the government. 'The erstwhile Field Marshal von Witzleben is posing as the Führer's successor. Of course no

Beck

National Socialist gauleiter will allow himself to be duped by, or accept orders from, these criminals. . . .³⁵

EVEN now Dr Goebbels' situation was anything but secure. An armored brigade under Colonel Ernest Bolbrinker, one of Rommel's toughest Afrika Corps regimental commanders, had arrived at Fehrbelliner Platz from the armored warfare school at Krampnitz.³⁶ Another tank unit under Colonel Wolfgang Glaesemer had churned to a halt in the Tiergarten park, only a few hundred yards west of Goebbels' residence. Remer's adjutant Lieutenant Siebert found out that General Guderian, the tank commanders' superior officer, had given them orders to shoot anybody who did not obey his orders. What was he up to? It was common knowledge that Hitler had treated him shabbily in December 1941.³⁷

Remer's predecessor Lieutenant-Colonel Kurt Gehrke offered to go to Fehrbelliner Platz to find out. Not fully trusting any army officers now, Goebbels sent Hadamowsky, his chief of staff in the R.P.L., as well and even when Gehrke reported that Guderian's officers were 'for the Führer' he was not satisfied and had Remer telephone the Panzer Reserve Brigade at Cottbus to send a battalion of heavy tanks to Berlin in case it came to a firefight with Guderian.³⁸

General von Hase was still doggedly trying to salvage Valkyrie. He sent an officer over to order Remer to return to him. Major Remer, equipped now with Hitler's personal authority, replied that on the contrary the general was to come to No. 20 Hermann-Göring Strasse. Hase arrived with Schöne and Massenbach. A monocled, upright officer of striking appearance, Hase put on his most affable air and told Remer that General Hermann Reinecke (a loyalist Nazi) had ordered him to seize the Bendler Strasse building. Goebbels intervened and no less affably invited Hase to remain under his roof as his guest. Hase inquired whether the kitchens could provide a meal, and there was a courteous exchange about whether a Rhine wine or a Moselle would complement it better before Goebbels turned to more pressing business. After a while, Hase asked Remer, 'Major, could you ask the minister whether I can go? My wife is waiting for me.'

At this moment however an S.S. man brought a message in to Goebbels. A search of Hase's office had turned up a rubber stamp reading 'Stauffenberg' and a pad of blank gate-passes. 'I am sorry,' said Goebbels, 'but I must ask you to remain.'³⁹

Shortly General von Kortzfleisch, the one-eyed commander of Wehrmacht District III (Berlin), appeared at Goebbels' door. No doubt anxious to establish his credentials he snapped at Hase, 'Well, Mr von Hase! You didn't expect to find *me* here!' He told Goebbels that earlier that day General Olbricht had placed him under close arrest when he failed to declare for the plotters, and had replaced him with General Baron von Thüngen (the judge on whom Goebbels' enemies had banked at that morning's hearing against Colonel Martin). Kortzfleisch unhesitatingly identified Fromm, Olbricht, and Stauffenberg as the ringleaders.⁴⁰

July 21, '44

VALKYRIE 477

Goebbels spared him, although there were sound reasons not to. This was an evening when he turned a blind eye to many an officer's shortcomings. Even Guderian's actions seemed ambivalent, but Goebbels thought highly of him and Hitler would shrewdly appoint him to replace Zeitzler the next day. All of these men—including Hase, Witzleben, Thüngen, Schöne—would eventually be hanged. In fact death was already beginning its harvest. General Fromm had had his fellow conspirators Olbricht, Quirnheim, and Stauffenberg shot by firing squad in the light of motor headlamps behind the Bendler Strasse building.

Fromm hoped he had thus saved his own neck. Brought up to Goebbels' study, the six-foot-two general, until now commander of Germany's reserve army, demanded to be allowed to speak by phone with Hitler. Goebbels ordered his arrest. He believed he was beginning to understand. So this was why the barracks were full of idle troops. Fromm, Olbricht, & Co. had been cynically holding them back for their Valkyrie. 'I'll see to it, general,' he told Kortzfleisch, 'that your barracks empty. And that they are refilled. Bank on it!' Inadvertently, the traitors had made total war a near-reality, and his heart sang with joy.

His house overflowed with fearful ministers, party officials, and prisoners. Arriving there after midnight Major Balzer found fifty people milling around upstairs. Somebody asked him to keep an eye on Fromm. Still feigning innocence, Fromm related that after returning from the Wolf's Lair that afternoon Stauffenberg and Olbricht had placed him under arrest. 'The background as described by Fromm was a bit obscure,' reported Balzer, 'and he was very agitated as he regarded his conveyance to Goebbels' home as a kind of arrest.' After ten minutes' questioning by Kaltenbrunner, Fromm was removed—'It certainly looked like an arrest to me,' reported Balzer the next day.⁴¹

Smoking nervously, Goebbels telephoned Magda in Dresden and told her some officers had tried to murder Hitler. She burst into tears. More officers arrived during the night, including General Hermann Reinecke and Colonel-General Stumpff, commanding Luftwaffe forces within the Reich. Göring telephoned an offer of flak units to crush the army revolt. Goebbels turned it down. After midnight Himmler put in a belated appearance. His explanation that he had been 'directing counter-operations from outside Berlin' seemed reasonable enough. In Goebbels' study the Reichsführer expressed relief that Goebbels had used the army itself and not the Waffen S.S. to crush the putsch. There must not be the slightest blemish on the army's name.⁴²

It was now July 21. The fated day had passed. At three-forty A.M. Bormann issued a triumphant dispatch. 'The traitors' action can be regarded as at an end.'⁴³ Around four-thirty Goebbels emerged from his study and announced, 'Gentlemen, the putsch is over.'⁴⁴ He escorted Himmler to his car and shook hands with him. By five his house was almost deserted. He took Naumann, Schwägermann, and Oven upstairs, pausing on each tread to tell them more tidbits. At the top he briefly shared a little table with a bronze bust of the Führer. 'That was like a

purifying thunderstorm,' he said, irreverently propping an elbow on the famous quiff. He lit another cigarette. Months later he would reflect, 'The Twentieth of July was in fact not only the nadir of our war crisis, but Day One of our resurgence.'⁴⁵

came WHILE Hitler called all his ministers to the Wolf's Lair on July 21, Goebbels necessarily stayed in Berlin. At his ministerial conference he narrated what had happened, though with cosmetic flourishes. The tanks assembling in Berlin, he averred, were General Guderian's, which 'the Führer had provided for protection.' Kortzfleisch had been magnificent. Hase, he scoffed, had behaved like a fool on his arrest—asking if he 'might telephone his wifey' and might he have a sandwich and a bottle of wine, 'preferably a Moselle.' It was their duty, Goebbels insisted, to ensure that no stain attached to the army's other generals. Himmler, he revealed, had told him that Fromm had kept six hundred thousand soldiers idle in Germany; these would now be released to the fighting front. Thus, this putsch was a real breakthrough toward total war.⁴⁶

Some of his listeners remained unconvinced. Immanuel Schäffer wondered how all this could have escaped Himmler's notice. And what about Göring's wiretappers?⁴⁷ The London press had a field day, with sarcastic references to several of Goebbels' previous utterances. Goebbels instructed his outposts to organize spontaneous open-air demonstrations of the public's happiness and joy.⁴⁸

Inevitably, he claimed that Hitler's 'miraculous escape' was further proof that their Führer was protected by Providence. Otherwise he ordered the putsch glossed over, like the Hess affair. He released no word of the plotters' aims, let alone of the true scale of the conspiracy which had extended from the eastern front to Paris and Vienna.⁴⁹ The traitors remained for Goebbels a 'minuscule clique of reactionary officers.' Despite all his efforts however there was enduring damage to the army; it violated sensibilities that their traitors had been hanged, rather than shot. Officers felt that their entire caste had been impugned.⁵⁰ Indeed, the Twentieth of July left residual issues which were still unresolved in Germany fifty years later.

55: Total War

July 22, '44

CATAPULTED to the Nazi equivalent of stardom for crushing the putsch in Berlin, Dr Goebbels arrived by train in East Prussia on Saturday July 22, 1944. He was determined to speak his mind to Hitler about total war and the need for a major show trial of the plotters.¹ Lieutenant von Oven gave him the latest cables. The British press was bragging about Stauffenberg's English-born wife. Other foreign sources claimed that 'the Jews in the neutral capitals' had known in advance about the bomb plot.² Moscow's newspapers were more logical, pointing out that the war would only be won on the battlefields—now barely one hundred miles from the Wolf's Lair. Goebbels saw this as proof that Stalin fully appreciated the hidden strength of ideological mass movements, and that they could talk with him when the time came.³

He called first at Hans Lammers' nearby field HQ. The change in attitude towards him was dramatic. Bormann and Lammers could not have been more friendly. Taking him aside, Keitel admitted that he had cried tears of joy on seeing that their Führer was unscathed. 'A miracle,' agreed Goebbels. The staff conference called by Lammers was soon over. Lammers himself proposed giving Himmler sweeping powers to rationalize the armed forces, and Goebbels the same powers over state and public life. Goebbels was somewhat astonished, but still orated to them for an hour on the need to present a united front to Hitler. 'The Führer,' he said, 'must be relieved of all minutiae so that he can dedicate himself to his great tasks.' Even Keitel backed him; he freely admitted that the Wehrmacht had manpower to spare.⁴ When Speer flourished his own total-war document, Goebbels swatted him like a bothersome insect, casting doubt in particular on the statistics. Lammers agreed to see Hitler the next day to win the agreed powers for Himmler and Goebbels.⁵

Goebbels was flabbergasted by how easy it had been. If Hitler endorsed it, they would have created 'practically a domestic dictatorship'—with Dr Goebbels as the dictator.⁶

He drove over to the Wolf's Lair with Naumann that afternoon beneath a broiling sun. He found Göring snorting about the army generals in Berlin—less for having tried a *coup d'état* than for declaring martial law without consulting him, the lawful successor if Hitler was indeed dead.

HIS head and legs still bandaged and sore from the myriads of splinter-wounds, Hitler limped over from his bunker to greet Dr Goebbels. The

spectacle tore at the loyal henchman's heart.⁷ Goebbels flung a Nazi salute with exaggerated formality. Hitler responded awkwardly, proffering his left hand. He told Goebbels that his first instinct after the blinding flash and explosion was to check that his eyes, arms, and legs were intact. His stenographer had lost both legs, and Schmundt one eye; Korten had been impaled by a fragment of oak table—all three were mortally injured.

A Berliner, the hut's telephone operator, had first identified Stauffenberg as the murderer. But he had got away—a hidden blessing in fact, as Goebbels reflected, because if he had been stopped they would never have unmasked the traitors in Berlin. Hitler fulminated with rage at 'that masonic lodge,' the general staff. Dr Dietrich was opposing Goebbels' idea of a political show trial, but not Hitler.⁸ No buddy-buddy courts martial for them, he grimly said: He would have the culprits stripped of their uniforms and turned over to the People's Court. Judge Roland Freisler would know how to deal with them.

When Hitler revealed that the traitor-generals had planned to arrest all the Reich defense commissioners like Goebbels, it was the minister's turn for indignation. 'What gives some jumped-up general,' he exclaimed, 'the right to treat as gangsters the leading National Socialists who put him in that uniform in the first place!'⁹

Dictating his diary entry afterward, Goebbels spoke with glutinous fervor of his love for the Führer. 'He is the greatest historic genius of our times. With him we shall see victory, or go down heroically.' Even Ribbentrop was nice to him during this visit, although put out by recent Goebbels articles which he felt might create in Tokyo the dangerous impression that Berlin was wooing London. The prospects of doing a deal with Churchill were more than dim, Ribbentrop advised Goebbels.¹⁰

THE plot and its aftermath marked the start of Speer's decline. At dinner with Hitler and Goebbels he was markedly subdued. He had talked with Himmler at midday, but the Reichsführer S.S. was also backing Goebbels.¹¹ They put their agreed total-war plan to Hitler the next day, July 23. He easily nodded it through. Ribbentrop tried (but failed) to exclude his ministry from the plan's ambit.¹² Lammers authorized Goebbels to call a Cabinet-level meeting on the thirty-first in the chancellery in Berlin to introduce his plans.

The total-war decree was published on July 26. 'At the suggestion' of the Reichsmarschall, it read—Göring's vanity being a factor even now—Hitler had appointed Dr Goebbels as Reich plenipotentiary for total mobilization.¹³ Goebbels sent a telegram thanking Lammers for the 'loyal manner' in which he had seen things through.¹⁴

Thus he returned to Berlin as *de facto* the first man after Hitler. Naumann shouted to Lieutenant von Oven, waiting on the platform, 'The Doctor has just won his greatest victory!' Thanks to the traitors, gloated Goebbels over lunch, nobody at HQ would ever dare to intrigue against him again. On July 26 he broadcast to the nation an account of how he had crushed the putsch. He hinted at new secret weapons and in

July 31, 1944 TOTAL WAR 481

his next article, entitled 'Going one better,' he developed a new argument—that the Reich was now regaining the technical superiority which it had lost for a while to the Allies.

In victory he was becomingly magnanimous. Addressing the other ministers in the chancellery on July 31 he invited them to submit ideas voluntarily to him.¹⁵ He proposed to slash his own ministry by thirty or forty percent. His special total-war staff would be limited to just twenty men. Naumann would chair a planning committee, and Gauleiter Wegener an executive committee.¹⁶ Total mobilization could now begin.

His target was to find one million men. One million soldiers: Equals one hundred new divisions: Equals victory. That was his calculus.¹⁷ At ten A.M. the next day Naumann issued the first two ordinances, outlawing token employment (a dodge to evade the labor-draft); and raising the female labor-draft age to fifty.¹⁸

To make time for his immense new task Goebbels halved his afternoon nap, ate sandwiches at his desk, forfeited his regular evening movie previews, and refused all invitations. Speer was an unwilling ally, but sat in on only the first Goebbels total-war sessions.¹⁹ He agreed to release all draft-exempted men aged between seventeen and thirty-four from his arms factories.²⁰ This alone would provide eighty thousand men for the armed forces. 'I myself,' said Goebbels at this time, 'have only one office with eight people, a few shorthand typists and two colleagues.'²¹ He worked all month scaling down his own ministry, shutting its eastern, theater, music, and graphic arts departments and annexing the party's propaganda directorate (the R.P.L.).²² He closed the training colleges for interpreters, music, and the history of art. He turned over the film industry's entire rising generation to the Telefunken firm in Berlin for precision labor. He halted his efforts to overtake Hollywood in cartoon production. He scrapped the need for movie tickets, to release the forty-eight workers who printed them. He closed every theater, cabaret, and circus, dissolved some orchestras, and posted a mandatory sixty-hour working week for everyone. He banned all congresses and conventions.²³

Briefing Hitler, he predicted that he would extract a hundred thousand men from the postal service by cutting red tape and halting junk-mail deliveries; and two hundred thousand more from 'domestic employment.'²⁴ Only Munich and Berlin would be allowed more than one daily newspaper. To release banking personnel he urged people to pay by cash. He abolished cake-making and closed all restaurants and stores except pharmacies, groceries, and cobblers.²⁵ He even tried to dissolve the Reich Labour Service.²⁶ Himmler had to secure a special dispensation to protect his own vital tasks.²⁷ Goebbels announced the death penalty for anybody caught violating his total war regulations.²⁸ By these means he expected to raise three hundred thousand men for the front by September 1, 450,000 more by October and a quarter million during November: One million men all told.²⁹

At the Wolf's Lair on August 2, Hitler and Goebbels discussed how to

deal with the traitors. The Gestapo investigations were turning up some nasty new details. Even Kluge and Rommel were implicated.³⁰ One of those arrested, Major Egbert Hayessen, had incriminated one of Goebbels' oldest friends, Count von Helldorff, in the plot.³¹ Goebbels' fury was indescribable.³² Ignoring Magda's reproaches he and Hitler had personally settled the Berlin police chief's gambling debts and bought him property. Yet even as Goebbels had been decorating him in February for heroism in the air raids, the count had been plotting his and Hitler's downfall. Hitler ordered that Helldorff was to watch each hanging until his own turn came.³³ Broadcasting that night Goebbels named Carl Goerdeler, the former mayor of Leipzig, as another conspirator and put a million-mark (\$250,000) bounty on his head. Among Goerdeler's effects the Gestapo found a draft list of names of future ministers, including both Rommel and Speer.³⁴ Stauffenberg, wrote Goebbels after reading Kaltenbrunner's investigation reports, had worked for months just setting up the putsch. Squandering immense amounts of scarce gasoline he had motored around, working on one traitor after another, until each ultimately fell in with him, as many had since testified in court. 'A good thing we got rid of Stauffenberg,' noted Goebbels. 'A negative personality with talents like that [is] always extremely dangerous.'³⁵

Stauffenberg, it seemed, had been in touch with the traitors in Moscow. Hitler showed Goebbels the latest Soviet propaganda leaflets, signed by German generals.³⁶ He said that the quartermaster-general Wagner (who had shot himself) had sent ten times more gasoline to sectors without tanks than to those with them.³⁷ While both men agreed that they could not publicly excoriate the generals in mid-battle Hitler ordered Goebbels to spare no detail of the other traitors' infamy—for example that they had also planned to kill him by planting a bomb in the knapsacks of three unwitting soldiers demonstrating a new infantry uniform to him.³⁸ It was not difficult for Goebbels now to persuade him to stage a political show trial rather than court-martial the plotters.

Goebbels and Himmler revealed this decision to the party's gauleiters assembled in Posen the next morning, August 3.³⁹ In fourteen days, said Goebbels, twenty-two generals of army group Center had deserted to Soviet captivity—and several were already broadcasting from Moscow.⁴⁰ Three German armies had been wiped out, he asserted, because the generals in Berlin had devoted less energy to the eastern front than to Valkyrie; yet he still insisted that it had been only 'a tiny clique' of traitors. 'Those found guilty will be sentenced to death, dressed in convict garb, and hanged regardless of their rank as field marshal or whatever else.'

How often the Führer pleaded for one more regiment and was told they didn't have one. But if you needed troops in the air-raid areas—in Berlin one day [November 23/24, 1943] they coughed up sixty thousand men! *Then* they had them—so you can't help thinking that they weren't sending the troops to the front because they needed them for treachery at home, to put the party down.

Aug 144

TOTAL WAR 483

Returning briefly from Posen to HQ to hear Hitler address these gauleiters, Goebbels' train made slow progress as all the routes east were now choked with troop-transports. He allowed himself a contented grin at this visible proof that total war had begun.

ALMOST every week he reported to Hitler.⁴¹ The post office patched together for him a secure nationwide conference-network to enable him to address all forty-three gauleiters each noon by loudspeaker telephone. Few of them willingly missed this daily briefing. Hans Frank in Kraków and Kurt Daluge in Prague joined the network, as did Epp in Munich and Kaltenbrunner in Berlin. Only his old enemy Erich Koch disdained it and when the police HQ in Königsberg was bombed out at the end of August he did not have the link restored.⁴²

By now the Red Army had overrun nearly all of Hitler's eastern dominions. The Normandy beachhead had burst, hemorrhaging Allied troops into France. Goebbels warned farmers to prepare for a coming food crisis. After attending a Goebbels Cabinet on August 28, Agriculture Secretary Darré recorded that Goebbels had spoken well: 'We're fighting with our backs to the wall.'⁴³

Public sympathy for Dr Goebbels was slipping however. Writing his weekly *Reich* article had become a burden.⁴⁴ His facile suggestion that the bomb plot had brought them 'one step closer to victory' attracted derision.⁴⁵ There was a growing belief that Germany could no longer win—that her leaders could not have bargained for such a rapid collapse in the west. Kaltenbrunner wrote to Goebbels that the implementation of total war was still taking too long for the public's liking, and that they looked to leading personalities 'and their wives' to set an example.⁴⁶ Taking the hint, Goebbels once more put Magda to work, making war goods at home at Lanke. 'As I'm switchboard girl, manageress, and Jack-of-all-Trades out here,' Magda wrote patiently to a friend, 'you'll always reach me here except for Mondays when I have to turn my work in at the factory!'⁴⁷

Speer began to mutiny as he saw his skilled labor siphoned off into army uniform. He wrote blistering letters, but with Keitel and Bormann backing Goebbels he had little leverage.⁴⁸ He complained privately that Goebbels was violating agreements, not returning calls, and creating *faits accomplis*. He demanded that his name no longer appear in newspaper reports about arms production, since the gauleiters had taken charge. He unloaded a sheaf of protest telegrams onto Goebbels' desk, but the minister remained unmoved.⁴⁹ 'You've been asked to give up 150,000 of your fifteen million men,' he reminded Speer. That was just one percent. 'I'd like to see one of my department heads tell me he can't produce as much with ninety-nine men as with one hundred.... No, Mr Speer, arguments like this won't wash with me!' Speer, he told his staff, was about to find out whom he was up against. 'I can't help wondering why the traitors put his name on their list.'⁵⁰

To Speer's chagrin, on September 1 Goebbels learned that nearly all

scene

of the gauleiters had met their August manpower targets. Three hundred thousand men had been called up—thirty new divisions. Despite that, arms production had actually increased. Speer had not a leg to stand on. His vanity punctured beyond repair he none the less flew to the Wolf's Lair to protest about Goebbels. From there he phoned Goebbels, who gave him short shrift, and Speer 'acted all cut up,' as the propaganda minister was pleased to dictate to Otte afterward.⁵¹ He was having his twice-weekly bath that evening when the phone rang—Hitler's S.S. adjutant Otto Günsche, instructing him to take the 8:13 P.M. courier train out to Rastenburg. Speer was calling for a showdown. Its departure delayed until nine o'clock while the minister completed his toilette, the train arrived at Rastenburg twelve hours later.⁵² Pre-empting the debate, however, Goebbels sent Hitler a telegram reporting the three hundred thousand new troops. 'I intend,' he dictated on the train, 'to plead with the Führer not to let Speer pick the currants out of my cake.'⁵³

THE Führer-bunker had been reinforced yet again, but even with twenty-two feet of solid concrete surrounding them they could all hear the rolling thunder of the approaching Russian guns. While Speer glowered, Hitler took Goebbels over to the map table and showed him where he would emplace those three hundred thousand new men. As the two ministers left the bunker their friendship was behind them.⁵⁴

Back in Berlin Goebbels found a minute from Hadamowsky reminding him of Clausewitz's dictum that the most dangerous point for an attacker was when victory seemed in sight: He relaxed his efforts while the defender redoubled his. Clipped to the memo was a British news dispatch: *The London Daily Mail* was bragging, 'Militarily, the war in the west is over.' This was the same blunder that the Germans had made at Moscow in 1941.⁵⁵

The German retreat in France had turned into a rout. Field Marshal von Kluge launched a counter-attack at Avranches, bungled it, and committed suicide.⁵⁶ 'The Americans,' noted Goebbels, 'are now showing off to us the same blitzkrieg tactics that we demonstrated to the French and British in 1940.'

Once he sat up with Hitler and his advisers until two A.M. discussing what to do; but Goebbels feared that Hitler was operating in the west with non-existent divisions and useless generals. 'If there were brutal party men in charge of the various sectors things would probably be quite different.'⁵⁷

The Americans crossed the German frontier at Aachen in mid September. The war might be over with dramatic swiftness, in weeks or even days.⁵⁸ The day of reckoning suddenly seemed nearer. Goebbels knew that Soviet propaganda was claiming that in three years the Nazis had murdered two million prisoners in Lublin, Poland.⁵⁹ He knew too that the Allies considered him a war criminal.⁶⁰ It was likely that top Nazis like him would be shot out of hand. 'It should not be assumed,' Churchill announced in London, 'that the procedure of trial will be necessarily

Sept '44

adopted.⁶¹ During one trial in Rome the mob had lynched a fascist defendant and tossed his corpse into the Tiber. 'These,' Goebbels mused, 'are alarming omens which no thinking man can ignore.'⁶² He did not intend to be taken prisoner. Hearing that General Hermann Ramcke had surrendered at Brest, Goebbels was baffled at the paratroop general's lack of any sense of immortality.⁶³ He had decided on suicide; but evidently he had no notion yet of killing his children, as he discussed with Max Winkler that autumn what would become of them after his death, adding that his son Hellmut showed few of his daughters' talents and he would like to leave him perhaps a small farm.⁶⁴

Since the daily drive in from Lanke was robbing him of precious hours, Goebbels moved back into No. 20 Hermann-Göring Strasse, while his family stayed out at Lanke.

Enforcing total war was still an uphill struggle. During September 1944 he ordered teenagers mobilized, and directed women to take over all hairdressing.⁶⁵ He had the propaganda companies slashed from fifteen thousand to three thousand men; but the railroad and the foreign ministry declined to make manpower cuts, and Speer stubbornly refused to release the next hundred thousand men from his factories.⁶⁶ He accused Goebbels of organizing a useless people's army. Goebbels called the allegation puerile—'We don't have any intention of pitting unarmed soldiers against the enemy,' he wrote. After hearing Speer pontificating about his responsibility before history, Goebbels dictated: 'I think we have let this young man get too big for his boots.'⁶⁷

Hitler ruled in his favor every time. When Speer flourished tables of statistics, Goebbels denounced them as lies.⁶⁸

The people were still waiting for V-2. 'If we didn't have more such weapons,' they said, 'Dr Goebbels would not have been able to speak so definitely about them.'⁶⁹ S.S. Obergruppenführer Hans Kammler told Goebbels that the V-2 attack on London had begun on September 8; the rockets were being launched from secret mobile sites in Holland.⁷⁰ Churchill however was admitting nothing, so Goebbels dared not commence his V-2 propaganda yet.

With France lost, the Luftwaffe's V-1 had all but ceased operations. Hitler again considered replacing Göring as commander-in-chief of the Luftwaffe, but again he abandoned the idea. 'It is horrendous,' commented Goebbels, 'the contortions that have to be gone through.... When the good times rolled, the Führer allowed Göring to get too grand; and now the bad times are here, he's like a ball-and-chain.'⁷¹ The public had no time for either Göring or Ribbentrop, Himmler was told at this time: They thought well only of Hitler, Goebbels, and of course the Reichsführer S.S.⁷²

For all his shortcomings however it was Göring who broke it to Goebbels that Harald was missing in action in Italy. Goebbels and Magda decided to keep it from Harald's siblings, who idolized him. He consoled Magda that her son might have been taken prisoner.⁷³

SEVERAL times Lieutenant von Oven heard Goebbels preface his remarks with the remark, 'If I were foreign minister. . .'.⁷⁴ He intently followed the Soviet-inspired rumors in the neutral press about Nazi feelers to Moscow and often speculated on Stalin's reasons for refusing to join in the Allied demand for unconditional surrender.⁷⁵ The Japanese, he knew, were aghast at recent events like the bomb plot and the military collapse in France, and they too expressed dismay at the lack of flexibility in Ribbentrop's foreign policy. The Japanese ambassador General Hiroshi Oshima urged Naumann to tell Goebbels that Germany must make peace with the Soviets; Japan was even willing to make concessions to that end.⁷⁶

The topic was dynamite, but Goebbels immediately asked both Himmler and Bormann to convey Oshima's message to Hitler. 'We've got to revitalize our foreign policy,' he noted.⁷⁷ He was not alone in this view. He found that Dr Ley, rattled that enemy troops had reached German soil, shared his concerns. Ley mentioned that many people hoped to see the propaganda minister replacing Ribbentrop eventually.⁷⁸

The upshot was that Goebbels drafted a twenty-seven-page pitch for Ribbentrop's job—a memorandum spelling out brutal home truths for Hitler on foreign policy. They had held neither the eastern front nor the Atlantic Wall, he said. They had lost most of their occupied territories. The only positive factor was the disunity among their enemies—redolent of 1932, when clever tactics had ultimately enabled Hitler to outsmart them. 'We did not wait then,' he pointed out, 'for them to approach us: We approached them.' Germany, he reminded Hitler, had never yet won a war on two fronts.

There was however little prospect of negotiating with the western powers, although that would, he conceded, conform with Hitler's own ambitions. 'Even if for instance Churchill secretly desired such a solution,' observed Goebbels, 'which I doubt, he would not in practice be able to implement it as he's hog-tied by domestic politics.' Britain was in a truly tragic situation, he argued: 'For her, even victory will equate to defeat. Not so the Soviet Union,' he continued, reaching the real burden of his memorandum. Stalin had no such inhibitions and the eastern solution would please Tokyo too.

'I cannot conceal,' wrote Goebbels, 'that I do not consider our foreign minister capable of initiating such a development.' He mentioned his ninety-minute row with Ribbentrop in July over his foreign policy articles in *Das Reich*.⁷⁹ 'With him,' wrote Goebbels, 'it is prestige über alles.'⁸⁰

Goebbels suspected that Hitler would be astonished to see such a brutally frank exposition. He signed it on Friday September 22, sealed it into a large white linen envelope, and sent it off by courier to Hitler's HQ.⁸¹ Meanwhile he tried to score off Ribbentrop for one last time, spitefully directing his total-war office to dissolve the foreign ministry's press, propaganda, and cultural departments. Ribbentrop countered by demanding that Goebbels disband his *foreign* department. Goebbels retorted that he had acted not in his capacity as propaganda minister,

Sept 22, 1944

TOTAL WAR 487

but as the Führer's special plenipotentiary for total war: And if Mr Ribbentrop ventured to complain to the Führer then he would tender his resignation and the Führer could whistle for the next seventy divisions.⁸²

Perhaps—thus he daydreamed—he would be foreign minister before another week was out. He drove out to Lanke on Saturday morning imagining Hitler opening that white envelope around midday (but he doubted that he would actually find time to read it before evening).⁸³

On Sunday Schaub told Naumann that Hitler had 'carefully read' the document, put it away to study again that night, and asked Dr Goebbels to come to the Wolf's Lair in four days' time.⁸⁴

The Loyal Henchman



Oct 14, 1944

56: The Specter of the Hangman

BEFORE that day came Hitler was taken seriously ill. By Thursday September 28, 1944 it was plain that he had contracted jaundice. Apathetic and weary, he lay in bed for days and his war conferences were canceled. General Schmundt died of his injuries, but Hitler barely stirred. Goebbels blamed the illness on Professor Morell's neglect, suspecting that the physician had injected so many questionable nostrums that Hitler's own organs had finally rebelled in this way.¹

From Berlin, he pressed the Führer relentlessly about the foreign-policy document, but only when the Russian assault on East Prussia resumed did Hitler lever himself out of bed and agree to receive him, on Saturday October 14.²

Killing time until then Goebbels toured the Rhineland, conferred with the gauleiters, and visited Kluge's successor as C.-in-C. West, Field Marshal Model.³ The tour increased his disillusionment with Speer. 'You keep falling for his miracle figures,' he told his staff back in Berlin, 'because your heart leaps when you hear of the thousands of tanks and fighter planes we're turning out. But Model says if they get three Tiger tanks it's a red-letter day for them.'⁴

Broadcasting on October 4 Goebbels warned the Allies not to underestimate the powers of a people to resist occupation. He spoke of the 'Morgenthau plan' devised by President Roosevelt's treasury secretary to destroy Germany's postwar economy; under it, six million Germans would probably die of starvation, and tens of thousands would be shot without trial including Hitler, Göring, Himmler, and Goebbels. Roosevelt and Churchill had just initialed this plan in Quebec. Even undistorted, it was a gift for Nazi propaganda. Even other Jews were horrified by it. In Goebbels' papers is an intercepted letter from a German Jew, a lawyer, in Switzerland, who wrote to Morgenthau that his plan was just 'designed to pitch the vanquished into the swamp of slavery.' 'Where hatred speaks,' warned this émigré, 'revenge answers.'⁵ Goebbels exploited the Morgenthau plan as cynically in 1944 as he had Kaufman's book three years before, telling his propagandists to emphasize constantly the American Jew's premise of 'forty million Germans too many in the world.'⁶ Both the Allies and the Soviets had the same intent, Goebbels could now suggest in *Das Reich*: 'Namely to truncate the German people by thirty or forty million.'⁷

From Canada, Churchill traveled onward to Moscow. Reading this

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Oct

hopefully as a sign of increasing frictions within the enemy coalition, Goebbels ordered newspapers to abstain from comment. 'I have the utmost respect,' he said in private, 'for this septuagenarian who flies halfway around the world to glue together a crumbling coalition on which his entire war strategy depends.'⁸

HE would be the first visitor whom Hitler received after his illness; but the great foreign-policy debate did not take place. Goebbels spent a frustrating Sunday and Monday hanging around the Wolf's Lair, not even invited to share mealtimes with Hitler. The Führer was in bed recovering, but still sickly and feeble.⁹ He had neither time nor inclination for a long talk—he granted ten minutes here, an hour there—and he had not even read the Goebbels memorandum. Bormann had given him the gist of it, he said; he flatly refused to replace Ribbentrop, 'a second Bismarck' in his eyes, and that was that.¹⁰

Returning by train to Berlin, Goebbels sat in silence with his head in his hands. To Oven, he seemed suddenly to have aged.¹¹ The specter of the hangman loomed dimly ahead.

HITLER had however confided two decisions to him. The first was to mount a surprise counter-offensive in the west to catch the Allies off balance at their weakest moment—the moment which Clausewitz had prophesied.¹² He briefed his western front commanders a few days later. Goebbels himself was not overly impressed. 'It is strongly to be hoped,' he wrote skeptically, 'that it will succeed.'¹³

Hitler's second major decision was to create a Volkssturm, a people's army of every remaining male between the ages of sixteen and sixty.¹⁴

That was a task that Goebbels could throw himself into. Recruiting posters went up on Thursday October 19. Seventy thousand Berliners volunteered at once, with twenty thousand more on Saturday and thirty-five thousand the next day. In Silesia, Karl Hanke mustered over one hundred thousand men on the castle square in Breslau. Broadcasting nationwide on October 27 Goebbels recalled the words that Clausewitz had used of the Prussian Landssturm, raised to fight Napoleon at Leipzig: 'It shall spread like a bushfire and shall finally smite the territory on which the invader has set foot.' 'We cannot,' said Goebbels, 'be swayed from our resolute and immutable decision ... to fight until a peace can be attained which will guarantee to our people their right to life, their national independence, and, in a broader sense, the basis of their existence, thus justifying the sacrifices.' This sounded very much like a willingness to discuss terms. 'The Führer,' he continued, 'with whom I spent several days at his headquarters, stands like a rock amid the surging tide.'¹⁵

One of Hitler's adjutants wrote privately that evening, 'Dr Goebbels just spoke. ... It's a treat to hear him every time.'¹⁶

Not everybody agreed. 'The German people can do without any propaganda stunts,' wrote one army corporal to Ribbentrop's wife after listening to the broadcast. 'We can see things just as they are.' 'Did you

Nov? '44

THE SPECTER OF THE HANGMAN 493

think,' he challenged Mrs von Ribbentrop, 'that we ordinary squaddies don't know about the bestial murders committed particularly by our S.S. in Russia? Where for instance are the 114,000 Jews of Lvón? We were there when they were trucked out of Lvón in 1942 and 1943 and shot not far away.'¹⁷

The specter looming larger with each news bulletin, Goebbels drove out to Lanke to celebrate his birthday.

At midnight Hitler telephoned his greetings, his voice still husky and run down. 'My last weeks have been almost entirely taken up with plotting our revenge,' he said, and Goebbels knew he was alluding to the coming great offensive in the west. Hitler still would not hear of getting rid of Ribbentrop. Disappointed, Goebbels handed the phone to Magda. They spent the evening together, husband and wife, vainly trying not to talk about the war. 'It will never let us out of its clutches,' he dictated the next morning, 'until it's all over.'¹⁸ It was to be his last birthday. Forty-seven and a half years would separate the humble cradle in Rheydt and the unmarked grave in Berlin.

Poisoning the already strained atmosphere, the trials of the traitors in the People's Court continued all autumn. Dr Dietrich had strongly opposed allowing any newspaper coverage of them. Goebbels had overruled him.¹⁹ Hadamowsky observed the first day, when Witzleben, Hoepner, and Stieff were tried and sentenced; he praised Judge Freisler as magisterial, National Socialist, and superior.²⁰ Goebbels had commissioned a film of the trial and of the hangings.²¹ Hitler however forbade its release, fearing a backlash, an 'undesirable debate' about the trial.²² He ordered the execution footage particularly kept under lock and key. Despite this newspapers reported that the British legation in Switzerland had shown a print to Swiss officers there. Investigations showed that it was a fake furnished by a Mr Saunders, a British secret service agent; it was evidently the origin of several postwar legends about the executions, including rumors that the men were hanged from meathooks and took ten hours to die.²³

The further trials brought many unsavory facts to light about Ribbentrop's diplomats. Goebbels adroitly brought them to Hitler's attention. 'The latest People's Court trials,' he pointed out, 'and reports that foreign service officials are refusing to return to the Reich, have shown that the foreign ministry is riddled with traitors and politically unreliable elements.' Perhaps, he mischievously wondered, the defection of Germany's European allies was the result of their sabotage?²⁴ Still Hitler refused to let Ribbentrop go.

TRUE to Clausewitz's prophecy, the Allies had run out of steam. On the western front they had also outrun their supplies. In the east, Hitler counter-attacked. In East Prussia, towns like Gumbinnen and Nemmendorf were recaptured, revealing the recent atrocities which the Red Army had committed. Göring phoned Goebbels and described the horrific scenes. Oddly, because the result must inevitably be the same scenes

of refugee chaos that Goebbels had himself striven to produce in France in 1940, he embodied these atrocity reports in press announcements so lurid that the local population could have no doubt what awaited them if they stayed.²⁵

12 It seems clear that he was interested less in victory now than in his place in posterity. On November 12 the Volkssturm volunteers were sworn in at emotional rallies all over Germany. Goebbels himself took the salute on Wilhelms Platz that Sunday morning. 'We were home again by noon,' wrote one veteran, who would later die defending Hitler's chancellery. 'This Old Soldier's heart just laughed out loud. So now I'm a full sworn-in Volkssturm man.' He found the minister's speech just *wunderbar*.²⁶ The newsreel shows these elderly, bemedalled Berliners marching like a hundred thousand extras in a film epic: Rank upon rank, proudly keeping step to the thump and blare of the bands, some shouldering ancient flintlock rifles, muskets, and carbines, others bearing more modern weapons that were taken from them as soon as they had marched out of camera range. Goebbels promised them better weapons when their time came, and warned them frankly that they might be committed on the main eastern front and not just here in Berlin. His ministry now admonished newspapers not to use the word *durchhalten*, 'hold out,' as it struck unhappy chords in those who had lived through World War One.²⁷

25 History, argued Goebbels in *Das Reich*, would surely not be so unjust as to let Germany lose again.²⁸ The Allies were war-weary, he said, speaking on November 25. When Churchill now conceded that London had been under V-2 attack for five weeks Goebbels used this tardy admission to illustrate the unreliability of British propaganda. 'Millions of people,' he triumphed in *Das Reich*, 'were witnesses of the use of the new German long-range weapon, which is incomparably more destructive than the V-1.'²⁹

1. Hitler left the Wolf's Lair and returned to Berlin for an operation on his throat. Goebbels too felt poorly; he had his chest X-rayed but nothing was found.³⁰ He called at the chancellery on December 1 and stayed with Hitler until five-thirty A.M. (He would call this one of the most interesting discussions he ever had with the Führer.) His voice still only a croak, Hitler revealed more about his secret plans for the coming Ardennes offensive. 'When I consider,' marveled Goebbels afterward, 'how sickly and weak he was when I saw him bed-ridden several weeks ago, when he already outlined these same great plans to me . . . then I can only say that a miracle has come over him.'

Hitler's main problem would be to inspire his generals, because they were infected with defeat. Nothing, he said, matched the western front in importance now. If his offensive succeeded they could Dunkirk the British all over again, blame the Americans, and restart their V-1 bombardment of southern England. As for the V-2, Hitler added meaningfully: 'Mr Churchill had every reason to keep it secret from his public.' With no lack of confidence in the final outcome himself, Hitler mentioned

Dec '44

THE SPECTER OF THE HANGMAN 495

that after the war he was going to give fine estates to his best political and military officers.³¹

It was unlikely that Reichsmarschall Göring would qualify. Every night the British destroyed yet another German city.

Hitler expressed uncomprehending sorrow about Göring. How could he still live in such repugnant luxury, wearing his pompous pearl-gray silk uniform? He had advised Göring, he said, to spend less time out at Carinhall surrounded by his assorted aunts, cousins, and sisters-in-law. Göring had even taken to receiving generals in a floor-length dressing gown and furry slippers. Hitler was determined to smash the camarilla of corrupt generals surrounding the Reichsmarschall, and to help his better qualities come to the fore.

In a British fire-raid on Heilbronn on December 4, 147 people were burned alive. Göring was powerless to prevent it. At midday on the sixth Goebbels found him out at Carinhall sipping tea surrounded by elderly female relatives and sycophants like Philipp Bouhler (the euthanasia mass-murderer) and Bruno Loerzer, Göring's crony in the Richthofen squadron and former chief of Luftwaffe personnel (Hitler had sacked him). For four hours Göring whined and argued, pleading his innocence of the Luftwaffe's failures. He blamed everybody but himself.³²

Two days later, at 6:45 P.M. on December 3, 1944 a chauffeur-driven car brought Hitler over to No. 20 Hermann-Göring Strasse to pay what proved to be his last visit to the Goebbels household. The children put on long dresses made from old curtains in 'Uncle Führer's' honor. As he was helped out of his greatcoat, Magda's mother found him a shadow of his former self.³³ His hands trembled uncontrollably. The children had not seen him for four years. Whereas Helga and Hilde (at twelve and ten, the eldest) had earlier captivated him, now his attention turned to six-year-old Hedda. She had eyes only for Günter Schwägermann, however, her father's one-eyed adjutant: She declared she was going to marry him, explaining: 'He can take his eye out!' Hitler beamed special favors on Hellmut too; two days earlier Goebbels had read out to him his little boy's school essay on 'November 9, 1923'—one of the party's high holy days—and tears of unkind laughter rolled down their cheeks. 'You would never have guessed,' his father had indulgently dictated into his diary, 'that he was the son of a writer.'³⁴ Surrounded by the paintings which Goebbels had retrieved from the bunker for the occasion Hitler talked of the devastation in Berlin and his sorrow at the loss of life. But he had done what he could, he sanctimoniously reminded Goebbels, to prevent this kind of barbarism in 1939. Then he chuckled at the rash prophecies the British were uttering about the war's coming end. Things were looking up, he said—an allusion to his new offensive, now only days away. 'I of course,' Goebbels prided himself, 'understand precisely what he's getting at.'³⁵

At eight-thirty P.M. Hitler made his excuses and returned to the chancellery.³⁶ Werner Naumann, towering over them in his S.S. briga-

* Hitler
is like an
angry
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dier's uniform, commented afterward in flattering terms on the astonishing mental and physical health of their Führer. Goebbels registered this without comment in his diary, but he told his former adjutant Prince Schaumburg-Lippe, 'Be glad you didn't see him. The Hitler you once believed in doesn't exist any more.'³⁷

MAGDA had fallen head over heels for Dr Naumann, a more dangerous rival to Goebbels than Hanke ever was. In charge of the secret project to microfilm the Goebbels Diaries, Naumann had begun dictating passages from them clandestinely to one of his private secretaries, Dorothea von Arnim. He planned to use them to overthrow the minister when the time came.³⁸ Naumann's own marriage had now completed its seventh year, and was entering the predictable doldrums despite their four children. Like Hanke before him, he regarded Magda as a tragic heroine. Guessing what was going on, Goebbels shortly ordered Naumann to end the relationship. Magda found some solace in her Buddhism and in writing poetry, some of which she sent to Naumann. As the nights lengthened, she spent more time with her husband. Often she found him standing quietly at the bedside of their six sleeping children.³⁹ Already they were nurturing dark plans for their brood.

A week after his visit Hitler left for the western front.

At five-thirty A.M. on Saturday December 16, 1944 his Ardennes offensive began, a last gamble. Artillery barrages drenched the five American infantry divisions holding the target sector. Three German armies backed by 170 bombers, ninety ground-attack planes, and fifteen hundred fighter planes punched at the American lines. Simultaneously V-1s and V-2s rained down on Antwerp, the final goal of his armies. One V-2 killed two thousand Allied servicemen in the Rex cinema in Antwerp. Goebbels, who had joined his family out at Lanke, ordered a total media blackout about the operation, overruling even Hitler, who had wanted a single-sentence, upbeat communiqué. By evening it was plain that Goebbels was right—Eisenhower was still in the dark about what had hit him.⁴⁰ Not until Sunday evening did the enemy announce the shocking news that Hitler had managed to launch this audacious operation (although they gave the credit to Field Marshal von Rundstedt).⁴¹ On Monday the eighteenth Hitler's High Command tersely confirmed it, provoking exultation in Germany's bomb-devastated cities. Goebbels drove out to Lanke again with Magda: Their six children were standing on the steps and sang a welcoming chorus which they had rehearsed all day with their governess.

As Hitler's tanks rolled on it was like the headiest days of 1940; the Allied air forces were virtually grounded by bad weather. Thousands of prisoners were taken, hundreds of tanks destroyed. For Magda too it was a kind of victory: This was their thirteenth wedding anniversary and she had kept her family together despite everything.

At one A.M. Hitler phoned them from his forward HQ in western Germany, excitedly predicting that the U.S. First Army was already

P 496

Dr.

The line are
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as the good
and the heroic
to see their
end as
worthy of
great tragedy.

c 16

even better,
the Goebbels
might
need
someone
like him.

D. T.
There are
councils—
sentiments
in every
marriage

* building the succession, calculating
his last chances, assuming the Allies

Dec 14/4 → Jan '45

THE SPECTER OF THE HANGMAN 497

beaten. Both men agreed that the enemy had not grasped what was happening—Eisenhower was still talking about a localized Nazi push by three or four divisions. Before hanging up Hitler reminisced with Magda about the wedding. 'The time since then has gone in a flash,' dictated Goebbels, the specter momentarily forgotten.⁴²

By December 21 the Germans had taken twenty-five thousand American prisoners and destroyed 350 tanks. Eisenhower called off all other operations to cope with the emergency. Stalin did nothing to assist his beleaguered Allies. Goebbels still warned against making damaging predictions.⁴³ This was as well, because on the twenty-third, with Hitler's broad armored blade thrust forty miles deep into the American ribs, the skies cleared and the Allied air forces struck back. Although history shows that the Nazi offensive was finally halted on the twenty-fourth Goebbels still hoped for a miracle. Using a typewriter to spare his Führer the struggle with his spidery scrawl, he sent him a Christmas message ('even if there's no real Christmas for us') marveling 'that once again, as so oft before, you are leading us out of the dilemma; that you are a lustrous example to us all; that you teach us how mind and will-power overcome matter and corporeality; and that therefore you tower above everybody and everything.'⁴⁴

Even now Goebbels still would not permit any fanfares about Hitler's big offensive. Out at Lanke the children put on their long dresses for Christmas Eve. Snuffing out the candles on the tree that night, after everybody had been given their presents, Magda said to her secretary, 'Next year we'll surely be at peace.'⁴⁵

After Christmas Goebbels' sister Maria and his mother left Lanke, and he never saw them again.⁴⁶

His New Year's Eve broadcast to the Reich was an empty panegyric. One propaganda official noted in his diary, 'I can't help it—overall it was a let-down.'⁴⁷ Public reaction to Goebbels' next article 'Der Führer,' with its glowing references to Hitler's modesty, his love of peace, and his foresight, was downright hostile. 'He has the Sixth Sense,' Goebbels had written, 'the gift to see what is denied the eyes of other mortals.' A Gestapo agent overheard one less gifted female tartly commenting that this was no doubt why Hitler had consistently picked as his closest friends people like the Italians who had betrayed him the most. 'There's no pulling the wool over his eyes,' Goebbels had written. In that case, grumbled the public, it was hard to understand the bomb plot of the Twentieth of July.⁴⁸

A few days later he went to Hitler's forward headquarters, near Frankfurt, for a two-day Cabinet-level discussion on injecting even more men into the armed forces.⁴⁹ On the first day, January 3, 1945 a blazing row developed. Speer objected that it sounded like a *levée en masse*, a people's army, again. He refused to be a part of it. Glaring at him, Goebbels called out: 'Then on your shoulders be the blame before history that we lose this war for the want of a few hundred thousand soldiers!'⁵⁰

Scene

He remained alone with Hitler until supper at eight. The Führer was so exhausted by the dispute that his left arm started trembling violently, and Morell had to give him extra injections.⁵¹

26

Under the new Goebbels *Aktion*, 240,000 men were promised to the army during the first quarter of 1945; the figure was not even approximately reached.⁵² He had bitten off more than he could chew and he met obstructionism all the way. Ludicrously, Rosenberg still refused to disband his ministry for the occupied eastern territories.⁵³ The corrupt Nazi upper echelons were interested only in their own well-being. On January 26 Goebbels drew Hitler's attention to General von Hanneken, who had shipped ham, lard, and furniture from Denmark to Paris, then used the truck to pick up wines and spirits for his own use (instead of urgently needed spare parts); Hanneken's motor launch had consumed a thousand liters of gasoline during July 1944—a month in painful memory.⁵⁴ On March 20 Goebbels pointed out to Hitler that the air force, which had had 172 active generals in 1941, now had 327 despite its reduction in size.⁵⁵ His campaign against Göring continued unabated, and unavailing, almost to the end.

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WHEN he had returned to Berlin from Hitler's HQ on January 5 the first complete print of the epic movie Kolberg had just arrived from Ufa's color laboratories. Goebbels viewed it privately that evening. Its gigantic battle scenes and the heroic performances by its stars were among the finest ever filmed by the German movie industry. The simultaneous public premieres were held on January 30 at the Tauentzien Palace theater and at Ufa's movie theater on Alexander Platz, directly after the broadcast of what was to prove Hitler's last speech (it lasted only sixteen minutes). The movie was a stunning success, particularly at the 'Alex'—there were fifteen curtain calls for the stars.⁵⁶ It was also shown that day to the troops holding out in Hitler's Atlantic fortress La Rochelle, where a fighter plane had delivered it only hours before. 'The film is so well suited to our times,' wrote one of Hitler's personal staff, 'that one would almost ascribe clairvoyant powers to those whose brainchild it is—it was conceived as far back as 1942.'⁵⁷ Goebbels also had the film flown into the fortresses of Breslau and Danzig, and as more copies became available they were sent to embattled Upper Silesia and the bridgeheads of Frankfurt-on-Oder, Neisse, and Königsberg. Copies were also provided for the personal use of Göring, Himmler, Dönitz, and Guderian, who were evidently as much in need of moral sustenance as these fortresses.⁵⁸

* Whatever happened to Kolberg
Anyone alive now can see it?

Jan 12th - 5 Pa

57: Kill off the Prisoners

IF Goebbels now realized that the war could not be won he kept this realization to himself. On January 12, 1945 Stalin's great offensive from the Baranov bridgehead on the Vistula began. With his eastern front crumpling Hitler abandoned his offensive in the Ardennes and returned to Berlin. The Red Army did not halt until it reached the river Oder, just east of Berlin.

From January 24 on Goebbels visited Hitler's chancellery almost every evening for half an hour or an hour alone with Hitler.¹ After their talk on January 28, he returned home sunk in thought. 'It is true,' he dictated to Richard Otte for the diary afterward, 'that a great man has to await his great hour, and that there's nothing one can do by way of suggestions that will help him. It's more a matter of instinct than of any logical process. If the Führer should succeed in turning back the tide of events—and I am firmly convinced that the chance will one day come for that—then he will be not the man of the century, but the man of the millennium.'²

With large sections of the front now fighting on German soil propaganda's greatest hour had come, Goebbels instructed the gau propaganda officials on February 5; ugly reports were coming in of collapsing troop morale. Their propaganda must be firm, realistic, and unhysterical, and not deal in illusions. 'This is not the time for empty phrases,' he said. They had to offer proof that Germany could still triumph. 'Unfortunately it's not possible to speak openly and authoritatively of the weightiest political factor in our favor, namely the problems currently facing the enemy and the friction within the enemy coalition, as any such utterances would damage this promising development.'³ Goebbels exploited the aftermath of the Ardennes battle to spread rumors over Radio Arnhem and by breaking into the B.B.C.'s news broadcasts that the British Field Marshal Montgomery was claiming all the credit for halting Hitler's offensive. It was one of his more successful gambits. The Americans were taken in and Goebbels' English counterpart Brendan Bracken had to make a formal apology to General Eisenhower.⁴

Sustaining Hitler's morale became no less important than that of the home front. As the Ardennes operations went into reverse, Goebbels scoured the books for historic parallels. He sent the Führer one such passage from a book on Alexander the Great.⁵ During February he began re-reading Thomas Carlyle's eight-volume biography of Frederick the

Great which he had first dipped into fifteen years earlier.⁶ Visiting Hitler at the end of the month, he related several chapters of the monarch's life story which, he recorded, greatly moved them both. 'What an example to us all,' he noted early in March. 'And what a solace and comfort in these dark days!'⁷ He saw an uncanny parallel between the foppish Hermann Göring and the king's feckless brother, and sent that chapter over to Hitler underlining the harsh treatment that the king had meted out to his sibling.

same? THE air raids continued with unremitting violence. The Ufa company had compiled a horrifying feature-length documentary on them, but as Ribbentrop had commissioned it Goebbels forbade its release.⁸ A feud, after all, was a feud.

In mid-January the propaganda ministry briefed every gauleiter on the latest British bombing tactics: Four to six hundred heavy bombers would attack small cities repeatedly, saturating every square yard with incendiaries and with high-explosive bombs fused to delay detonation long enough for the weapon to penetrate to the crowded basements of even the tallest buildings.⁹ The morale problems multiplied. The view became widespread that an occupation of Germany by the Anglo-Americans would not be 'all that bad' if it put an end to the bombing and the strafing attacks. Goebbels circularized the gauleiters on the need to counter this dangerous defeatism by propagating a base hatred of the imperialist and ideologically bankrupt British and Americans. The new line was to be: 'There is no difference between the bolshevik atrocities in East Prussia and the British and American atrocities on the Rhine.' Their enemies' aim, he suggested, was the same—death to all Germans. 'Gangsters at work!' must be the new leitmotif of their propaganda.¹⁰

At midday on Saturday February 3 1,003 B-17s attacked the center of Berlin, dropping 2,265 tons of bombs with the intent of creating maximum casualties and chaos among the refugees thronging into the capital. 'Five thousand-pounders,' wrote one American bombardier, adding inexplicably: 'Shacked [i.e. killed] women and children!' Although most of the flak had been withdrawn to the Oder front, twenty-one B-17s were destroyed over the city, and ninety-three suffered battle damage.¹¹ The chancellery was hit again; fires raged, the streets were festooned in trolley-bus wires, but by late afternoon virtual normality had returned.

Hitler began a troglodyte existence in the bunker beneath his chancellery garden. It was not easy for Goebbels to hobble down the steps into the labyrinth of rooms, since the Führer and his staff occupied the remotest rooms at the deepest level, fifty feet beneath the grass and shrubbery. For a time he called on Hitler about every other day.¹² The Führer's cramped study was tiled in olive green and white, and sparsely furnished—Anton Graff's famous portrait of Frederick the Great, a faded

Feb '44

KILL OFF THE PRISONERS 501

photograph of Hitler's mother, and a sofa upholstered in white and blue being the only accouterments.*

With the Russians now so close, on the last day of January 1945 Goebbels had sent Schwägermann out to Lanke, his lakeside mansion on the Bogensee, to evacuate Magda, their six children and two governesses into the air-raid shelter at Schwanenwerder. The next day he declared Berlin a 'fortress city.' Surrounded by her brood, Magda was in a world of self-delusion. From Berthe the milliner's she purchased a green velvet hat, a black turban, and a brown hat trimmed with fur; she mentioned that 'when things calmed down' she'd like to have a brown hat remodeled.¹³ 'The news you'll be hearing isn't rosy,' she wrote to Harald, now in British captivity, on February 10. 'We're all sound in heart and health; but as the whole family belongs together at times like these we've shut down Bogensee and we've all moved back into Berlin. Despite all the air raids our house is still standing and everybody here—including your grandmother and the rest of the family—is well housed. The children find it splendid that there's no school and, thank God, they've noticed nothing of the seriousness of the hour.' 'Papa and I,' she concluded, 'are full of confidence and we're doing our duty as best we can.'¹⁴

She often thought of Hanke, and once or twice they spoke until telephoning was no longer possible as the Russian armies engulfed and encircled Breslau; Hanke, a man of undeniable bravery, wrote to his wife that he intended to hold on until help came from outside. 'I can see at any rate,' he said, 'that the Reich will not succumb and that is the main thing.'¹⁵ The gauleiters, Goebbels had often noted, were all cut from a different cloth than the generals. 'You can be sure,' he wrote to Julius Streicher on his sixtieth birthday, 'that right now we are doing everything conceivable to bring this great fight for the destiny of our people to a happy and victorious end.'¹⁶

Feb 1

* The Goebbels argument - the Russians are now at the other end of a stretched rubber band.

Feb

ON the following night, February 13, the British bombers crowned their orgy of destruction by obliterating the hitherto unscarred capital of Saxony, Dresden. Overcrowded with a million fleeing human beings—refugees, prisoners, evacuees, and children—a city innocent of air-raid shelters, with all of its flak batteries removed to the eastern front and its fighter squadrons grounded for lack of fuel, Dresden became an inferno within minutes. Between sixty and one hundred thousand men, women, and children were choked to death or burned alive in the ensuing firestorms as this and another British raid three hours later engulfed and incinerated the city. For days after this apocalypse soldiers cremated the bodies five hundred at a time on makeshift pyres in the city center. Tens of thousands more remained interred beneath the ruins.

+ like the crematoriums of Auschwitz - Feb 14

On February 14 Goebbels saw Hitler at 7:15 P.M. for three-quarters of an hour. He demanded that Göring be stood before the People's Court

* Of which a bloodstained shred survives in private hands in the United States.

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for negligence; but again Hitler weakly refused. Several times afterward Goebbels had fierce arguments with the Führer about Göring and his way of life; both men agreed that Admiral Dönitz was a shining example, as Raeder had been before him. Goebbels even suggested Dönitz should take over the Luftwaffe. On February 17 he proposed that they formally repudiate the Geneva Convention—why else should Allied pilots feel they could murder, slash, and burn with impunity? They should start executing Allied prisoners: One for each air-raid victim.¹⁷

Hitler told him to draft a proposal.

Two days later, according to one source, the secret twelve-page document was ready in Goebbels' safe.¹⁸ Several people claimed the credit for preventing the plan from being implemented. Ribbentrop's opposition was probably the deciding factor for Hitler.¹⁹ The Führer told Goebbels later, with noticeable regret, that he had allowed Himmler, Keitel, and Bormann to talk him out of it.²⁰ Fritzsche told interrogators that he delayed the radio announcement until the order was rescinded.²¹

DRESDEN was unmistakably the beginning of the end. As Goebbels contemplated Hitler's stoical attitude to the growing certainty of defeat, comparisons with Frederick the Great again crowded in on him. He put it to Hitler on February 27 that their only aim now must be to set a heroic example to their children's children, in case a similar crisis should ever again beset Germany. Hitler agreed: It was necessary to work for one's people, even if the achievements were only ephemeral.²²

On the last day of February Goebbels broadcast to the nation for the first time in weeks. He spoke for seventy minutes. 'Seen purely militarily,' he admitted straight away, 'the launching of the successful Soviet offensive from the Baranov bridgehead has sharply changed the general war situation, and not to our advantage.' He was not, he said, going to mince his language about this depressing but 'by no means hopeless' situation. The Soviets had mastered a similar crisis in 1941, and the British in 1940. 'The misfortunes that have beset us are very painful but they are in no way synonymous with the forfeiting of our victory and the consequent dissolution of the Reich and the biological extinction of the German people.' They had again stabilized an eastern front, he said, and the territories they had lost would be regained. The indescribable bolshevik atrocities in the east were however 'no products of their fantasy.' 'We would rather die,' he said, echoing Stalin's famous phrase, 'than capitulate.' What was the consequence of the Allies' aerial terrorism? he asked: Just that the Germans hated them even more. He reiterated that they had to believe in victory, 'unless the Goddess of History be just a whore of the enemy.' Now however he added that if victory be denied them then he would consider life no longer worth living, 'neither for myself, nor for my children, nor for all whom I love and together with whom I have fought for so many years for a better and more noble existence.'

He knew, said Goebbels, that people would ask him how victory could still be theirs. He drew on a familiar analogy. 'Today,' he said, 'we're like

Feb 14/4

KILL OFF THE PRISONERS 503

the marathon runner who has thirty-five of the forty-two kilometers behind him.²³

This, his penultimate broadcast, was a brilliant effort. It met a mixed reception. 'When Goebbels speaks,' said S.S. Oberführer Kurt Meyer that evening in British captivity, 'it really grips you.' 'At any rate,' said an army general, 'he has achieved . . . a people which willingly cooperates with the government.'²⁴ Others felt differently. Major-General Bruhn, also in British captivity, called the speech 'the most two-faced, hypocritical exhibition there has ever been,' and Major-General von Felbert agreed: 'What a scoundrel he is. If only I could lay hands on that dirty beast, that swine . . . this lump of filth, this muck-worm!'²⁵

'You can't give the people confidence with speeches like that,' remarked Dr Ley to his mistress, adding that Hitler and Goebbels never saw the front line. 'These people have no idea how grave the situation on the fronts actually is. If only one of them would leave his comfortable four walls and visit the fronts!'²⁶

Hitler did in fact inspect the Oder front on the first Saturday in March, but when Goebbels visited the Führer on the fourth he refused even to allow the press to report it. Goebbels found him more depressed than ever, and he was horrified at the uncontrollable tremor in Hitler's left hand. His sixth sense was however intact. The Führer bitterly pointed out that while his general staff and Himmler, now commanding the army group on the Oder, had expected the Russians to go for Berlin, he had anticipated that they would first move on Pomerania, to the north-east. He had as usual proved right. Goebbels wondered why Hitler could not get his own way with his own general staff. When the Führer stressed the need to hold the Rhine, Goebbels could only agree: If the British and Americans once got through into central Germany, there would be no need for them to negotiate with Hitler at all. They talked about the Dresden catastrophe—Hitler's own half-sister Angela had written him an eye-witness account of the horrors. Goebbels proudly revealed that Magda and the children would stay with him in Berlin. While Hitler's spirits were still high, the HQ generals with whom Goebbels spoke were very downcast. 'The atmosphere in the Reich chancellery,' noted the propaganda minister, 'is pretty grim. I'd prefer not to go there again because you can't help being infected by the mood.'²⁷

— *memories of Geli*

Himmler, like Speer before him, was now skulking in bed with nameless disorders in the clinic at Hohenlychen outside Berlin. On March 7 Goebbels visited him and they warily explored each other's views for two hours and exchanged venomous remarks about Göring and Ribbentrop. Goebbels said that he had warned Hitler that by hanging on to Göring he was asking for trouble—he hinted at a top-level mutiny; but still Hitler refused to draw the appropriate conclusion. Himmler showed that he believed their only chance lay in doing a deal with the west; Goebbels disagreed—Stalin was far more realistic than the hooligans in London and Washington.²⁸

ACC

Scene

He had evidently given up all hope of a deal with the west. General

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7. Dittmar noted on February 27, 'Everybody I speak with in the propaganda ministry is in favor of the western solution. But that too is a leap in the dark.'²⁹

48. GENERAL Schörner's troops counter-attacked in Lower Silesia and recaptured Lauban from the Russians. On March 8 Goebbels visited the little market town. Schörner was a popular commander, because he was tough. He told the minister he was hanging deserters in public with a placard round their neck: 'I'm a deserter and refuse to defend German women and children.' This was a general after Goebbels' heart.³⁰

Churchill!
While badly damaged by the fighting, Lauban was still better off than any town that had been bombed, reflected Goebbels. Among the paratroops parading to hear him deliver a fiery and wholly improvised speech on its market square he discovered his former department head Willi Haegert—and a sixteen-year-old, Willy Hübner, who had just earned the Iron Cross for bravery.³¹ Goebbels saw to it that a picture of himself and Hübner went round the world. He shuddered as he drove past the burned-out hulks of Soviet tanks, these steely robots with which Stalin was hoping to subjugate Europe. Back in Görlitz that evening he spoke in the town hall to thousands of soldiers and Volkssturm men. He told them of the children murdered and the women violated by the Russians, and proclaimed à la Ilya Ehrenburg, 'Slay the bolsheviks wherever you find them!' 'This enemy,' he said, 'can be beaten because you've beaten them before! Make them pay dearly in blood for every inch of German soil. We shall fight them in the fields and forests, and in the cities, and in every street and in every building until they have lost so much blood that they're no longer able to fight on.' 'History,' he declared, 'will grant to us the victory, because we alone deserve it.'³² Writing in *Das Reich* he said: 'The only thing that matters is for a people to have the nerve to wait for its great hour and then to use it.' The best thing a warring nation could do, he argued, was to think only of war, and then to devote itself to it body and soul: 'The most total war is always the most merciful.'³³ These were slogans that all sounded very familiar: They had however lost much of their captivating power.

11.
He saw Hitler again on Sunday evening March 11 and told him about Lauban. Hitler told him Göring had recently visited him to discuss the need to 'clear the air politically' toward the enemy. Hitler had retorted that he'd do better to clear the air, period. Clutching at straws, Hitler was convinced the enemy coalition was disintegrating. But they could not deal with the British. Churchill, said Hitler, was running amok—he had got it into his head to destroy Germany, regardless of whether he ruined his empire in the process. In a reversal of his earlier stance Hitler now believed that, if he could inflict a bloody enough reverse on the Russians, the Kremlin might open up toward him: In the resulting separate peace with Russia, he hoped he might still achieve a beneficial partition of Poland, with Hungary and Croatia within the German ægis and freedom to continue operations in the west. Whether he could no

Mar '44

KILL OFF THE PRISONERS 505

longer bear to listen to such fateful illusions, or whether he too was wearying of the war, Goebbels decided that one such talk a week with Hitler, on a Sunday evening, was enough—it was worth any number of regular daily visits.³⁴

It was twelve years to the day since he had set foot in the propaganda ministry on Wilhelm Strasse for the first time as minister. Schinkel's ornate palace had survived five years of continuous air raids, including some of the heaviest in history. Between eight and nine P.M. on March 13 it was hit by a single 4,000-pound blockbuster bomb dropped by a twin-engined Mosquito plane. Goebbels drove straight over, and found his beloved theater, the Throne Room, the Blue Gallery, and all the other fine architectural features on whose restoration he had lavished so many years of effort, leveled to the ground. For a while the fires which had broken out threatened to touch off five hundred bazooka anti-tank weapons he had stockpiled in the building. The front wing had collapsed, and the blast wave had wrought havoc in Hitler's old chancellery too.³⁵ 'The worst imaginable augury for the next twelve years,' reflected Goebbels, and added some nasty remarks at Göring's expense.

Hitler told him that night that in their latest talks Göring had been 'totally shattered'—'But what use is that!' exclaimed Goebbels impotently in his diary. Still chewing over past grievances Hitler also showed him the shorthand record of the conferences in which he, unheeded by his generals, had correctly predicted that the Russians were going for Pomerania next. Together they walked over to watch the firefighters quenching the smoldering ruins of the propaganda ministry.³⁶

On March 16 Goebbels invited the press round to his residence and lectured them for an hour on the barbarity of the Allies in the west.³⁷ He now knew that Ribbentrop's peace feelers to Britain had been rebuffed. Goebbels' emotions were mixed, between *Schadenfreude* and apprehension about his own future. He commented on rumors that Himmler had offered the enemy Hitler's head, 'They're demanding more heads than just Hitler's,' he remarked in his diary.³⁸ Two days later the Americans saturated Berlin's poorer districts with bombs, killing about five hundred people. Telephoning Goebbels to ask about morale, Hitler mentioned that he had been in conference with his generals until six A.M. That day Kolberg was evacuated, almost without a fight; Goebbels saw to it that it was not mentioned in the High Command communiqué.³⁹

One after another all their fortress-cities were captured, except one. On March 20 Gauleiter Karl Hanke sent a dramatic report from Breslau. The city was in ruins, but he and his men were making the Russians pay in blood for every inch. 'Gentlemen, nobody is too good to die for Grossdeutschland,' he had proclaimed, quoting the words of Rommel, his commanding officer in France in 1940: 'Attack!' The experience he had gained in the battle for Berlin before 1933 had served him well, he wrote to Goebbels, who reflected once more that this was the type of National Socialist who put their army generals to shame.⁴⁰ Hanke

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The film!

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 3 managed to get through one phone call on March 29 to Goebbels and Magda, and even to send her a gift: she thanked him in terms of touching warmth, praising his courage and telling him that Hitler had recently called him 'the Nettelbeck of this war.' 'Our fondest wishes always go with him,' wrote Magda to Hanke's trustiest friend, 'and I sincerely believe that he will one day get out.'⁴¹ Hanke's men fought on until they had only two hundred guns, seven tanks, and eight assault guns left; the city held out until May 6—by which time Hitler had appointed him Himmler's successor as Reichsführer; Hanke escaped, and was murdered by Czechs partisans a few days later.

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 1 The army generals meanwhile distinguished themselves by apathy and negligence. The Americans discovered a bridge across the Rhine intact at Remagen and hurled their forces across it. On March 21 Goebbels found Hitler tired and dejected, aged by this fresh and unexpected catastrophe, and kept going only by 'iron will-power.' Morale everywhere in the west was collapsing. Food was running out. Deprived of sleep by the Allied bombers, the population was irritable and hysterical. When Goebbels mechanically mentioned Frederick the Great Hitler snapped that the Seven Years War was very different from this one. 'I can't get anywhere with him,' noted Goebbels, alarmed, 'even with my analogies from history.' Göring, said Hitler, revealing one cause of his aggravation, had just set off for Bavaria with two trainloads of entourage to visit his wife. Yet he again refused Goebbels' suggestion that the man must go. Goebbels dictated in impotent fury: 'What can I do? All I can do is unremittingly badger the Führer and put my criticisms to him.' Back home he found No. 20 Hermann-Göring Strasse in darkness: A power cable had been hit in the afternoon's Mosquito raid. Magda had left for Dresden to visit her women friends. He felt low and depressed. 'What should I do,' he pondered, 'to implement what I consider to be right?' He felt responsible to the nation, as one of the few people left with Hitler's ear.⁴²

scene In Dresden Magda visited Ello Quandt at the White Hart sanitarium. 'The new weapons will be our salvation,' she encouraged her sister-in-law, then guiltily checked herself: 'No, I'm talking nonsense. There's nothing else. Germany's defeat is only a matter of weeks.' Ello asked what she intended to do. 'We're all going to die, Ello,' she replied. 'But by our own hand, not the enemy's.' They had been the leaders of the Reich, she explained; they could not duck the responsibility now. 'We have failed.'⁴³

At the back of her husband's mind were the Russian newsreels of their heroic defense of Leningrad—of civilians collecting the bodies of their soldiers, tossing them into pits, and fighting on.⁴⁴ Berlin could and must be defended to the last man. He asked Hitler's permission to convert Berlin's main east-west highway to a landing strip—it would mean dismantling the ceremonial lamp standards and tree-felling in the Tiergarten on either side. Hitler grudgingly said, 'That's okay by me,' but disallowed

March 1944

KILL OFF THE PRISONERS 507

the tree-felling later.⁴⁵ When all this was over, he reasoned, Berliners would still need trees. Goebbels called on the western city of Mönchengladbach to put up a special fight, but that town fell and the neighboring Rheydt, his home town, surrendered to the American in mid-March without a shot being fired.

As these and other grim reports flooded across Goebbels' desk, he wished he could close the window shutters and hide within those four walls for ever: And wrote that wish down in his diary.

March '44

58: Death of Another Empress

So Dr Goebbels remained in Berlin, a prisoner of his own pride and his own routine from the moment he strapped on his leg-calipers each morning. In the west General Eisenhower's armies had swept across the Rhine and a pincer operation was about to shut off the Ruhr, the Nazis' last arsenal. The Rhinelanders had seemed almost to welcome the Allies: The civilians saw relief from the air raids, and from the threat of pestilence and starvation. The wording of Goebbels' diaries had become circumspect. 'In fact,' he dictated as April began, 'events in the west seem likely to give the enemy some hope of overwhelming us militarily quite soon.'¹ Lieutenant-Colonel Rudi Balzer brought back from the western front shocking reports of the collapse of morale which confirmed what Field Marshal Kesselring had said a few days earlier.² The city of Mannheim had telephoned the approaching Americans offering to surrender.³ Cologne surrendered in an hour. In Frankfurt German women were embracing the American troops. Townsfolk were openly hanging out the white flag and jeering at their own soldiers. Goebbels sent in thirty of his finest orators—he had no choice, because the printed media had virtually disappeared. In the south Hitler's last oil-producing fields in Hungary were about to be overrun. Dictating the diary each morning gave Goebbels little cheer. If only he could get Hitler to broadcast, as Churchill had in 1940 and Stalin in 1941, it would be like a battle won.

The scale of the air war was now such that when nine hundred American heavy bombers attacked Hanover and Berlin he dismissed it as a 'medium-scale' operation. His field office in Hamburg reported that people were commenting scornfully on the swift execution of the German officers who had allowed the Rhine bridge at Remagen to fall into American hands and suggesting quite openly—in letters to which they did not hesitate to append their full names and addresses—that the Reichsmarschall should face a firing squad as well.⁴

THE British and Americans had now crossed the Rhine in strength and had flooded into central Germany as far as Würzburg. Hitler suspected treason in the west, and sent for Goebbels at noon on March 27, 1945. For an hour they strolled through the chancellery garden beneath his study window, talking. Goebbels noticed how stooped the man had now become; and that the gardens had been torn up, as reinforcing work on

March 14/4

Hitler's subterranean bunker proceeded. Hitler had decided to stay in Berlin, and the mood of the generals around him was already one of despair. Goebbels remarked that they should have quit the Geneva Convention when he said: He blamed Speer and Bormann for talking Hitler out of it. They were still half-bourgeois, these men—"They think, but don't act, as revolutionaries." Goebbels warned of the collapsing morale in the west, and urged Hitler to broadcast to the nation like Churchill and Stalin in their moment of crisis. Fifteen minutes would do the trick, he said.

scene

GOEBBELS saw Hitler again on March 30. A day or two before, he had asked Himmler's security service, the S.D., to scour its files for the old, forbidden horoscopes that had been cast for the birth date of the Republic, November 9, 1918, and the birth date of Hitler's Reich, January 30, 1933.⁵ The tracts were on his desk at the ministry on the twenty-ninth. 'Both are in startling agreement,' he furtively informed his diary. 'I can well understand,' he hastened to add, 'that the Führer has prohibited any trafficking in such unverifiable things. Even so it is not without interest to see that both the Republic's horoscope and that of the Führer are prophesying that our military affairs will look up in the latter part of April. In May, June, and July things will go downhill again but hostilities will cease, it seems, in mid-August. God grant,' he dictated cynically, 'that this be so.' Fearful lest these pages fall into the wrong hands he added: 'For myself such astrological prophecies are of no account. But I intend to exploit them . . . because in times of crisis people will clutch at the slightest straws.'⁶ Among these people he counted his Führer; but Hitler had slept for only two hours and was in no mood for horoscopes.

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Just six days ago, said Goebbels, producing his tattered copy of Carlyle, he had found himself reading the description of the most harrowing days of the Seven Years War. The great monarch had seen no way out of the imminent defeat; Frederick had set himself a final deadline, and wrote to the Count d'Argenson that if things did not look up by then he would swallow that phial of poison. Three days before that date, continued Goebbels, reading from the book, the Empress Elisabeth of Russia had suddenly died. Her half-witted successor Peter III had offered peace to Frederick, and the House of Brandenburg was saved. Why should they not hope for precisely the same kind of miracle now? Looking up, Goebbels saw tears flooding into Hitler's eyes.⁷

scene

For some days Goebbels had pleaded with Hitler to broadcast a flaming oration to the Reich. But the Führer displayed what was to Goebbels an incomprehensible aversion to facing the microphone now.⁸ The S.D. had informed him after his New Year's speech that people felt that it had not said anything new, explained Hitler; now he wanted to wait for good news from the western front before broadcasting again. That might take some time. The news from there was devastating. The new Me262 jets, on which he had relied, were scoring notable successes but the mass desertions of his troops could not be ignored. They were, Goebbels

suggested, a consequence of Hitler's having rejected his drastic suggestion after the Dresden massacre that they repudiate the Geneva Convention and start executing Allied prisoners. Hitler agreed. Goebbels also criticized their efforts at starting guerrilla warfare. Admittedly, the collapse in the west had come with breathtaking speed, but their Operation Werewolf movement—an attempt to create an underground army of partisans—was a flop.⁹ So far only one man, the enemy-appointed mayor of Aachen, had been assassinated. Goebbels planned to take over 'Werewolf' himself, giving it a newspaper and a radio station, using all the tactics that he had developed in *Angriff* in the early Thirties. He even had a new 'Isidor' in his sights—he was planning the assassination of the newly installed 'Jewish police chief' of American-occupied Cologne as well as Heinrich Vogelsang, a 'former Nazi nincompoop' whom the Americans had appointed the mayor of Rheydt, his home town.¹⁰ The Americans immediately founded 'the first free newspaper' in Rheydt, just to spite Goebbels.¹¹ Worse, an American army lieutenant held a Passover ceremony for three hundred Jewish soldiers in his parental home in Dahlemer Strasse—a Corporal Sidney Talmud of Brooklyn set up a camp stove on the family porch and made pancakes for three hours.¹² This really stuck in Goebbels' craw.

Even now, he complained, the war was still not being fought radically enough. The 'weakling' Otto Dietrich was wet-blanketing his every move. When Goebbels announced that the mayor of Aachen had been 'sentenced by a national tribunal' Dietrich killed the announcement by pointing out that it was untrue.

Hitler needed a Goebbels now, as defender of Berlin, more than a Dietrich. He told Goebbels that Dietrich was sacked.¹³ He had just dismissed General Guderian too—the mystery man of the Twentieth of July. Guderian, he said, had lost his nerve again, just as in the battle for Moscow.¹⁴ (This was a signal for Hitler to launch into well-worn reminiscences on how he, single-handed, had saved the entire army that winter of 1941–42 after his generals had thrown their armies into retreat.) The Führer brooded on the fiasco that Sepp Dietrich had just suffered with his Sixth S.S. Panzer Army in Hungary. He told Goebbels privately that he had come to accept that Himmler had no strategic talents after all. 'Punctilious, but no warlord,' was his assessment. The army's Ferdinand Schörner, whose army group was fighting magnificently in Czechoslovakia, was the only general that Hitler spoke well of—'one hell of a guy, the type you can blindly rely on,' he said, and Goebbels saw tears start into his eyes again.¹⁵

THEY parted, each invigorated by the other as so often before. Goebbels did not see his Führer again for two weeks. 'One sometimes has the impression,' he recorded on April 4, 1945, modifying his famous argument of 1943, 'that the struggling German nation is breaking out in a sweat at this, the direst moment of its crisis: And for the layman it is hard to tell whether this is the herald of recovery or the harbinger of death.'¹⁶

scene

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April '44

DEATH OF ANOTHER EMPRESS 511

As the last V-2 rockets were launched at targets in Belgium, the S.S. newspaper *Das Schwarze Korps* adopted the infelicitous line that while Germany now had no hope of avoiding military defeat 'The Idea' must live on.¹⁷ Dr Goebbels inveighed against the 'too clever by half' intellectuals who had penned such defeatist drivel. He issued to the editors of surviving newspapers orders to underscore every act of old-fashioned valor that came to their attention, and print stories about Allied atrocities too—to prove that the British and Americans were no less barbarian than the bolsheviks.

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He had persuaded Hitler to authorize the Luftwaffe's first (and last) major kamikaze operation on April 7, 1945.¹⁸ While the fighter-control radio wavelengths were swamped with female choirs singing the Horst Wessel anthem and voices urging the charioteers to die for Germany, over 180 Me109 fighter pilots took off that day pledged to ram the American bombers. Although seventy-seven pilots died in the clash over the Steinhuder Meer west of Hanover, only twenty-three bombers were destroyed. Goebbels expressed disappointment at this meager yield of so much individual bravery.¹⁹

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The next day's leader article in *Das Reich* used radical language; even he found, reviewing the article, that he had 'somewhat abandoned' his previous 'moderation and reserve.' The one slender consolation that he offered was that one way or the other an end was indeed in sight. 'The hour that precedes the sunrise,' he reminded his readers, 'is always the darkest of the night. The stars that have cast their gentle glow have already subsided and the deepest darkness draws in the approaching dawn. None need fear that it will forget to come. The black veil of night will suddenly sink and the sun will soar into the blood-red firmament.' As it was in nature, he concluded, so it was in the lives of men and nations, particularly in war. 'We are confronted by bloodthirsty and vengeful foes who will put into effect all of their diabolical threats if once they get the chance. Let nobody deceive himself on that score. The one side will decimate the German people by bullets in the nape of the neck and by mass deportations, the other will *ausrotten* by terror and starvation.'²⁰

Hunger already stalked the streets. Learning that two hundred housewives had stormed two bakeries in the impoverished suburb of Rangsdorf, Goebbels had two of the ringleaders beheaded that night and ordered the fact announced by wall-poster and via the muted voice of Berlin's cable radio. He hoped to hear no more about mobs storming bakeries after that.²¹ He asked his driver if the Berliners would fight to defend their city. Rach answered bluntly, 'They see no point. For them the war's already lost.'²²

That weekend Magda came downtown from Schwanenwerder. 'A rather melancholy evening,' Goebbels noted, 'in which one piece of bad news after another came crashing in.' 'We often find ourselves desperately asking where it is all going to end,' he added. They talked over their own rapidly approaching end. Ribbentrop and Göring were both extending

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feelers to the British via Switzerland, Sweden, and Italy. Unlike the Russians and even the Americans, the British slapped down every such maneuver. 'There is not the slightest opening here.' Goebbels noted. The Russians were allegedly demanding East Prussia as the price of armistice and this was an impossible demand for Hitler.²³ A few days later Goebbels told Rach that the other ministers were leaving—Göring had already sent his wife and child to safety; but, he added, Magda and he had decided to stay.²⁴

The Red Army was already overrunning Vienna. Goebbels blamed this on the softness of their gauleiter Schirach. He resolved that the Russians would not have a walkover in Berlin. Volkssturm and Hitler Youth battalions were already drilling at the bridges and streets which they would have to hold. But, Goebbels learned, stocks of gasoline, food, and coal were already running low. The Americans boasted that they had captured one hundred tons of Gold, the entire German reserves, in a salt-mine in Thuringia. Goebbels recalled that he had opposed Funk's decision to evacuate the Gold from Berlin.²⁵ The railway board now admitted that they had taken steps to transport the two wagon-loads of Gold back to Berlin—but the Easter weekend had intervened.²⁶

General Theodore Busse, whose Ninth Army was holding the Oder front, had assured Goebbels that he would hold off the coming Soviet offensive. Goebbels hoped that in the west General Walther Wenck's Twelfth Army would seize the initiative against the exposed American flank in Thuringia. As for the wider outlook, he put the optimistic view to Count von Krosigk that all that mattered now was 'staying on our feet' until the enemy coalition fell apart.²⁷ The finance minister argued that it was not enough to wait, but that the Reich could not expect serious results from sending out second-class foreign ministry men—a reference to Ribbentrop's recent abortive peace initiative in Stockholm.²⁸ 'Goebbels agreed spiritedly,' recorded Krosigk in his diary, 'and confided to me that certain feelers have already been put out.' Goebbels made no secret that he still coveted Ribbentrop's job, and hinted that Krosigk might put a word in with Hitler. When the count pointed out that he had not seen Hitler for years, Goebbels offered to set up an audience: Krosigk might start with budgetary matters, the Führer would talk sooner or later about the broader situation, 'and that's where you jump in.' Nothing came of it.

ON the twelfth Goebbels paid his regular Thursday visit to the front, the Oder bridgehead at Küstrin, only a few miles from Berlin, his car loaded with cigarettes and cognac for the men. Like all populist statesmen it thrilled him to descend from the Olympian heights to the levels at which the ordinary man fought, lived, and died. He sat up smoking and drinking with General Busse's staff until midnight had long passed. Busse reassured him that his army would withstand the coming Soviet onslaught. 'We'll stand fast here until the Engländer kicks us up the ass,' he roared.²⁹

April 13, 1944

DEATH OF ANOTHER EMPRESS 513

'If there is any justice in history,' Goebbels declaimed to the officers, 'a turning point must soon come—one like the miracle of the House of Brandenburg in the Seven Years War.'

'Who's the empress who's going to snuff it this time, then?' asked one of the colonels, in a tone just short of sarcasm.

The propaganda minister drove back to Berlin. An air raid was under way. From twenty-five miles away he could see the slow, lurid flashes as the blockbusters exploded, the glittering showers of marker flares and target indicators cascading out of the black, starless skies above—'The darkness before the dawn.' The streets were deserted as he drove up to No. 20 Hermann-Göring Strasse, but there was a knot of people waiting for him on the steps.

A babble of voices greeted him. Somebody thrust a Reuters bulletin into his hands: The American president Roosevelt had died at Warm Springs that afternoon.³⁰

Goebbels clutched the slip of paper, his polished, receding forehead illuminated by the fires started by a shower of incendiaries on the Hotel Adlon—his gau headquarters now—and the Reich chancellery further down the street. His eyes glistened, though with Goebbels true tears only rarely came. 'Champagne!' he finally croaked. Was the Nazi sun not now about to soar into a new, blood-red firmament? 'Champagne! Bring out our finest champagne—and put me through to the Führer!'³¹

'Mein Führer,' he shouted down the line. 'It is written in the stars that for us the second half of April will bring the turning point. This is Friday the Thirteenth. The turning point has come.'

59: The Man of the Century

As he looked at his family now Goebbels can have seen them only as actors in a drama, in which he had cast himself in the leading role. Their approaching end inspired no horror in him. Once he had hoped for a peaceful death, a private funeral, and burial in some open space in Berlin. 'I'd prefer to die quite alone somewhere,' he had remarked in 1941, 'and be buried only by those who really love me.'¹ This now seemed an unlikely circumstance. Lord Vansittart of the British Foreign Office had only recently declared that the only issue remaining on war criminals was 'the site of the gallows and the length of the rope.'²

In January 1940 when a conversation with Hitler had lightly turned to methods of suicide Goebbels had agreed that the pistol was best.³ Later he inclined toward cyanide and asked Ley to obtain enough for his entire family.⁴ By 1943 he had resolved that suicide *in extremis* was the only way to lasting glory. Had he not expected General Paulus to 'forfeit fifteen or twenty years of his life' to earn a thousand years of immortality?⁵ He told the swashbuckling S.S. Major Otto Skorzeny that he could not figure out why Mussolini had not killed himself after his arrest that July: 'He did not lack the means—we know he had the poison on him. . . . Why didn't he swallow it the moment he found himself in captivity and his life's work in ruins?'⁶ 'If all our efforts, work, and struggle should lead nowhere,' Goebbels commented a few days later, 'then I should not find it hard to die. In a world where there was no room for my ideals there would be no room for me.'⁷ He added weight to his memorandum to Hitler in July 1944 by promising something that his rival Speer never could, the mass suicide of his entire family if they lost the war. 'Each time I am out at Lanke with my six children, then I realize all over again that neither I nor my entire family could, or should, live on into an era that is not our own.'⁸

The more he read the letters of Frederick the Great the more Dr Goebbels took note that the great monarch was never without his poison capsule during the critical years of the Seven Years War, and that he aspired to be 'buried beneath the batteries of his artillery.'⁹ The death of his old friend Eugen Hadamowsky, of which Goebbels learned on March 2, 1945, 'leading his company into action . . . a bullet through the heart,' also affected him deeply.¹⁰ After this, said S.S. Gruppenführer Berger, Goebbels tapped his breast pocket and said: 'I and my whole family will commit suicide.' 'I have the right,' the minister intimated to him, 'not to

March + April '45

die alone if I commit suicide, but for a whole lot of my followers to die with me.' The S.S. general contradicted him—he personally had no intention of dying with Goebbels: 'You have had nothing but good out of National Socialism. I have had only worry and work, so I don't feel the same moral obligation.' Goebbels just looked at him blankly.¹¹

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Magda was at one with him on this matter. She was fatalistic and perhaps even callous about it all. Looking across the room at her at a Berlin society function back in 1933 the French ambassador had remarked, 'I have never in my life come across a woman with such cruel eyes.'¹² Death did not frighten her. After Werner Naumann lit a cigarette for her in March 1945, with a special-agents' lighter, she expressed curiosity about it; Naumann opened it to reveal a poison capsule concealed within, and at her request—in front of Dr Goebbels—gave it to her.¹³ Once she had leaned over tipsily to the family major-domo Wilhelm Rohrsen and confided to him how she imagined her family would die. 'We shall all be invited to the Führer's,' she slurred. 'And there we shall drink chocolate. This chocolate will taste good, and it will be our last.' She raised her glass to Rohrsen. 'The Führer will not die without my husband,' she promised.¹⁴ 'We shall all die—even you.' Shortly she would have Joseph to herself, and there would be no contenders.

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OF course even after Roosevelt's sudden death the British and Americans did not have one bomber less, nor the Russians fewer tanks; but as Goebbels told Krosigk on the phone that morning, the news would cause a sea-change in morale. 'We can and must see in it the dispensation of an all-powerful history and justice,' he explained.¹⁵

'Why not just say of God?' rejoined the finance minister. He wrote to Goebbels an hour or two later, arguing that Roosevelt's death was a divine gift—'but one that we've got to earn.' The president's death removed the last obstacle to dealing with the United States. In this letter Krosigk also sowed the idea in Goebbels' mind that the Americans and the Russians were really making for Prague now, not Berlin.¹⁶

GOEBBELS' diary as recorded on the glass microfiches in Moscow ends with April 12, 1945; the plates also record several hundred pages of shorthand notes, and there is reason to believe that these contain his final diary dictation, which Otte had no more time to transcribe.¹⁷

April

Hitler's desk diary shows only one appointment at this time with Goebbels, at midday on April 15.¹⁸ Magda evidently came too—it was a Sunday—because Hitler's pilot Hans Baur saw her stepping in through the back gate just as Hitler was inspecting the outside of the three-storied bunker which Speer had now completed beneath the garden. Hitler was shocked to see her and offered her Baur's plane to fly down to the Obersalzberg. 'Berlin will be a rat trap!' he said.¹⁹

April

'Mein Führer,' she replied, 'my husband is gauleiter of Berlin. Life without my husband would have no purpose for me—nor did I bear my

children to have them put on display in the Soviet Union and America as the children of the propaganda minister Goebbels.'

FINIS Germania was the spirit of the leading article that Goebbels published that day. The 'bloodthirsty and vengeful' enemy coalition was wasting away; it had 'to triumph swiftly or triumph not at all.' The article displayed a confidence bordering on complacency: 'I know for certain that the Führer will find a way out of the dilemma,' he soothed his readers. The rest was written purely for posterity. 'We have no cause to hang our heads before the enemy,' he wrote. 'What the German people has achieved in this war is already history. No filthy hand of foe shall ever fling aside the crown of laurels that already adorns our nation's brow.' Now, he recommended, was a time for all to fight—'And what life is too precious to sacrifice *pro patria*!' 'So let each and every one of us swear a private oath, devoid of any pathos, to choose to die rather than accept the yoke of servitude.' They were traversing the final phase of this war, he wrote. 'One cannot humanly conceive of how it can last much longer.'²⁰

Indeed it could not. At dawn on the sixteenth Marshal Georgii Konstantinovich Zhukov and Marshal Ivan Stepanovich Koniev threw eighteen Soviet armies at Berlin—not Prague. At night the children looked out of their window and asked why the flashes lighting the horizon produced no rain. Dr Goebbels was in hourly contact with General Busse. He commandeered a fleet of Berlin omnibuses to rush soldiers to the battlefield.²¹ To Hitler's anger Goebbels sent five of the Volkssturm battalions, although they were supposed only to be used for immediate neighborhood defense.²² Goebbels suspected however that this was already the last battle. He asked Lieutenant von Oven to help him burn his private papers—including pictures of parents, yellowing and mounted on thick card, snapshots of the little Joseph in a sailor suit, school reports, a letter of the Rheydt Cotton Trading Association, academic diplomas, and hotel bills. 'Look at this one,' he said, holding up a studio portrait photograph. 'Now there was a woman of perfect beauty!' The portrait, of actress Lida Baarova, joined the others in the flames.²³

He dedicated to Hitler, on the eve of his birthday, a last brilliant broadcast honoring him as the man whom the German nation had in free elections chosen as their leader. 'If Germany still lives today,' he thundered, 'if Europe and the cultured and civilized Occident have still not been swept away for ever into the fathomless maelstrom that yawns black and ominous before us, then they owe it to him alone. He will be the Man of the Century.' What, he continued, had the enemy to offer? 'Nothing but their superiority in numbers, their brutish mania for destruction, their diabolical rage that masks the chaos of mankind in dissolution. An entire violated continent stands testimony against them. In every country of Europe once flourishing cities and villages have been turned into cratered wastelands.' Now however the final act of this mighty tragedy had begun. 'The chief of the hostile conspiracy has been crushed by Fate, the same Fate which left the Führer on July 20 standing erect

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April 20 + 21, '45

and uninjured amid the dead and dying and rubble so that he might complete his works.' 'Pay heed, ye Germans!' he declared into the microphone. 'Millions of people, in every country on Earth, are looking to this man, wonderingly and perplexed: Does he know a way out of this mighty misfortune that has beset the world? He will show it to the nations.'²⁴

The underlying message was vintage Goebbels: Blind, self-sacrificing loyalty to his Führer. A message went to Magda to have the children brought to No. 20 Hermann-Göring Strasse ready to brighten the Führer's birthday the next day. At midnight he went over to the chancellery bunker. With glazed and red-rimmed eyes Hitler spoke to them of his hardening resolve to hold northern Germany and Norway if the Reich should indeed be sliced in two, and to defend the Alps and Bohemia-Moravia. To Dr Ley he hinted that he would move into this southern 'fortress' himself.²⁵ Goebbels however had already decided to defend Berlin to the last, since the army generals had proven incapable. Ley urged him at least to send his family to safety. Goebbels was obstinate. 'I shall die here, if I have to, and Magda has decided to do likewise.'²⁶ Not for him the humiliating surrender of a Paulus. 'What does he do, this man who has ordered and exhorted his men to stand and die?' he had said in 1943. 'He trots off into captivity, not forgetting to pack his little suitcase on the way!'²⁷

At midday on April 20 there was a small birthday parade. Goebbels followed Hitler up the winding staircase into the garden. The Führer turned up the collar of his gray greatcoat and walked down the line of youngsters, handing out medals to the teenagers who had fought the Russians off with flak guns or bazookas. At four P.M. he went back down into the bunker, never to come out again alive, and Goebbels returned to his residence.

The High Command and war department evacuated Berlin, traveling to Bavaria, leaving skeleton staffs in Berlin. Dr Friedrich-Wilhelm Krüger, Lammers' Staatssekretär, broke it to Goebbels that every other ministry had now left for the northern 'fortress'. Infuriated by this news Goebbels demanded to know how he was expected to defend Berlin without them.²⁸ Thus his own ministry staff found that they, like their minister, were hemmed into the Reich capital. (Most of the women, around three hundred in all, went into Russian captivity and were not seen again.) When Otto Meissner, Hitler's pettifogging old Staatsminister, phoned later that day from the safety of Mecklenburg to explain that 'the Reich government' had withdrawn from the danger zone 'to preserve its freedom of action' Goebbels snarled at him, 'The Reich government is where the Führer and I are, not where you are! For twelve years I have had the urge to spit in your eye. For twelve years I have suppressed that urge—and today I regret it.'²⁹

That night Bormann sent a telex down to the Obersalzberg, reading 'Wolf [Hitler] is staying here as situation can only be restored by him if at all possible.'

The dawn of Saturday April 21 came with Russian artillery lobbing

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shells at extreme range into Berlin.³⁰ White-faced, Goebbels presided over one last eleven o'clock conference at No. 20 Hermann-Göring Strasse, one long tirade against the traitors who had talked Hitler out of actually invading Britain in 1940, who had lost their nerve in Russia, who had failed again in Normandy in June 1944, and who had finally shown their colors on July the Twentieth. When Fritzsche suavely objected, the minister snapped, 'What can I do with men who won't fight even when their womenfolk are being raped?'³¹ Then an evil leer spread over his face, as he paced up and down behind his big desk. 'It's up to the German people,' he murmured softly. They had literally asked for National Socialism. In November 1933 after Hitler quit the League of Nations 40.5 million Germans had voted for his policies and only 2.1 million against. Hitler had not forced himself on them; and now, God help them. He folded his arms, and almost spat out the final words: 'Well, what were you working with me for, gentlemen? Now they're going to slit your pretty little throats.'³² According to Werner Naumann, he said: 'Gentleman, we hung together and we'll be hanged together.'³³ He stalked out, pausing only to fling them a Hitler salute.

At noon-fifteen a Russian shell burst only a hundred yards away, shaking the whole structure. Unshaken, Goebbels read out over cable radio the dramatic 'emergency speech' that he had long prepared, pausing only to shake splinters off the pages as another shell burst blew in several panes of glass. He had intended to send the metal boxes containing the glass-plate microfiches of his diaries into the southern 'fortress' but that road was now closed. That same Saturday afternoon he entrusted to Rudi Balzer his latest diaries and the shorthand notes and told him to carry them out to the north. Then he told his secretary Otte to bring him all the secret papers from the two ministry safes to the Reich chancellery. 'Go to ground,' he told Otte. 'When Berlin is liberated report back to me again.' Otte rendezvoused at the Adlon with Balzer and they set out in an army staff car for Hamburg. About halfway, for no good reason, the two men halted and buried the precious diary notes in a preserving jar outside Perleberg.^{34*}

Goebbels made his final dispositions. His staff was now reduced to Naumann, Heinz Lorenz—the unobjectionable former deputy of Sün-dermann, who had been dismissed with Otto Dietrich—and perhaps thirty others. He told them that he proposed, when it was all over, to poison his children.³⁵ In Berlin itself the only newspaper still being printed was an emergency news-sheet, the *Panzer-Bär*. His last leader for *Das Reich* was a shrill call for Germany's women and children to fight from the rear against these insolent invaders who had wasted entire cities with the cruel air warfare. Some, he wrote, might think nothing of living

* Armed with the map drawn by Balzer and aided by a proton magnetometer team from Oxford university, the author searched for this jar in the heavily wooded area in the then communist eastern Germany in 1970, without success. Otte, at the time still a serving west German government official, was unable to accompany us.

April 22 1944

'under the knuckles of the Anglo-American banker-Jews,' but the true German would be hurling hand grenades, laying Teller mines, and sniping from rooftops and cellar windows.³⁶

AROUND six o'clock the next evening, April 22, he received a shocking telephone call from Hitler who asked him, voice breaking, to go over straight away. 'It's all over,' was all that he would say.³⁷

In a few brief words Goebbels disbanded the propaganda ministry. He handed out poison capsules to his staff. He told Oven to get Rach and a second driver for Magda and the children. 'We're moving into the Reich chancellery. No. 20 Hermann-Göring Strasse will not be defended. It's to be abandoned. The Volkssturm and S.S. men are to transfer to the chancellery gardens. My staff are to join the troops.' Magda asked if she should pack her toilet articles, and dismissed her children's nanny with the words: 'We're driving over to the Reich chancellery. We've all got to take poison.'³⁸

Hitler's midday war conference had broken up with him on the verge of a nervous breakdown after learning that S.S. Obergruppenführer Felix Steiner had not even begun the counter-attack from the north on which everybody was banking. He had slammed down his bunch of colored pencils and declared that the war was lost. 'But you're very wrong, gentlemen, if you believe that now I'll leave Berlin after all. I'd sooner put a bullet in my brains'—and with that he had pushed through them into his private quarters saying, 'Get me a line to Dr Goebbels.'

They stood aside as Goebbels limped into Hitler's study. What followed, perhaps his finest speech, was delivered to an audience of only one frightened dictator bent on killing himself within the hour. Setting the ultimate seal on his personal loyalty, he told Hitler that he would move into one of the recently vacated bunker rooms himself at once and bring Magda and the children with him too.³⁹

Back outside, Bormann begged him to talk the Führer into flying out while he still could. Goebbels blinked around, his eyes searching out Traudl Junge; he briefed the young, slim secretary to be so kind as to meet his family when they arrived. Taking General Jodl aside, he revealed that Hitler had made up his mind to stand and fight in Berlin. Was there, he asked, no means of preventing the encirclement?

'There's only one way,' replied the general. 'And that's to denude the Elbe front and deploy all our troops in the defense of Berlin. It's just possible then that the Americans won't press their offensive.'⁴⁰

Surprisingly, Hitler agreed to this at once and ordered Keitel and Jodl out of the bunker to take personal command of this historic about-face by Wenck's Twelfth Army.

Moving into Morell's old quarters directly across the gangway from Hitler's rooms and the map room—the physician took one of the last planes out that same night—Goebbels sent out a 'Führer Order' for Panzer-Bär to print the next day. 'Anybody who encourages or approves any move that weakens our power to resist is a traitor! He is to be shot

Apri
2

scene

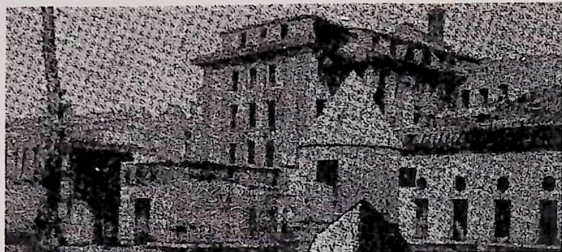
out of hand or hanged! This order stands even if his moves are alleged to have been ordered by the gauleiter Reich minister Dr Goebbels or by the Führer himself.⁴¹ Berlin's cable radio announced that Hitler was staying in Berlin.⁴²

That evening Goebbels fetched his family. Rach drove him and Magda, the children followed in a second car. They passed Ribbentrop's car: He was leaving Berlin for the north.⁴³ Down in the bunker Magda moved with her children into adjoining rooms, not caring that her matrimonial separation from her husband—whose room was one floor below—thus became obvious to everybody. Traudl Junge took the children to the store-room, where Hitler's birthday presents still lay in a heap, while their mother went to work her magic on the Führer.⁴⁴ Later she wrote to Harald that Hitler had told her to flee Berlin. 'But you know your mother,' she wrote, 'we're of the same blood. That was out of the question.'⁴⁵ She sent Rohrssen back to pick up a few things at Schwanenwerder, then released him from his duties.⁴⁶

From now on Goebbels directed what was left of the propaganda battle by telephone from the bunker. His old gau HQ had been converted into an emergency hospital, as had the Adlon and the chancellery's main Voss Strasse bunker, connected by a short tunnel to the Führer bunker. In the Voss bunker surgeons operated in semi-darkness on casualties from the increasingly close battle areas. The stench in the bunkers was overpowering, but through it all came the laughter and chatter of the six Goebbels children as they collected round their table perched on one of the landings and waited for the two armies that their father and 'Uncle Führer' had promised were coming to rescue them. Many people offered to take Magda and the children to safety under a Red Cross flag. Shortly before midnight on the twenty-second Professor Karl Gebhardt, head of the Red Cross, knocked on Goebbels' door; Schwägermann, the adjutant, inched it slightly ajar and Gebhardt called out to ask if he should take the children out of the city. Goebbels said sleepily, 'No, we're staying here,' and motioned for Schwägermann to shut the door again.⁴⁷

AT midday on April 23 Keitel and Jodl were back. Those two armies were making only slow progress. At 12:40 P.M. Berlin's radio broadcast that Hitler, Goebbels, and his family were still in Berlin.⁴⁸ 'The propaganda ministry has been turned into a fortress,' it was announced. 'The staff has been collected into a Volkssturm battalion under Staatssekretär Naumann's command. Even women staff members have been trained to use the Panzerfaust bazooka.'⁴⁹ The following day all German shortwave propaganda transmissions to the world ceased.⁵⁰

In the afternoons Hitler went to drink chocolate with the children. His favorite was still the eldest daughter Helga, now twelve. Her long blonde tresses were demurely plaited—a truly Aryan maiden. She stood 1.58 meters in her socks, and beamed all over her pretty, oval features. When her little brother Hellmut read out his latest essay on 'The Führer's Birthday,' she chirped, 'You pinched that from Pappi!'

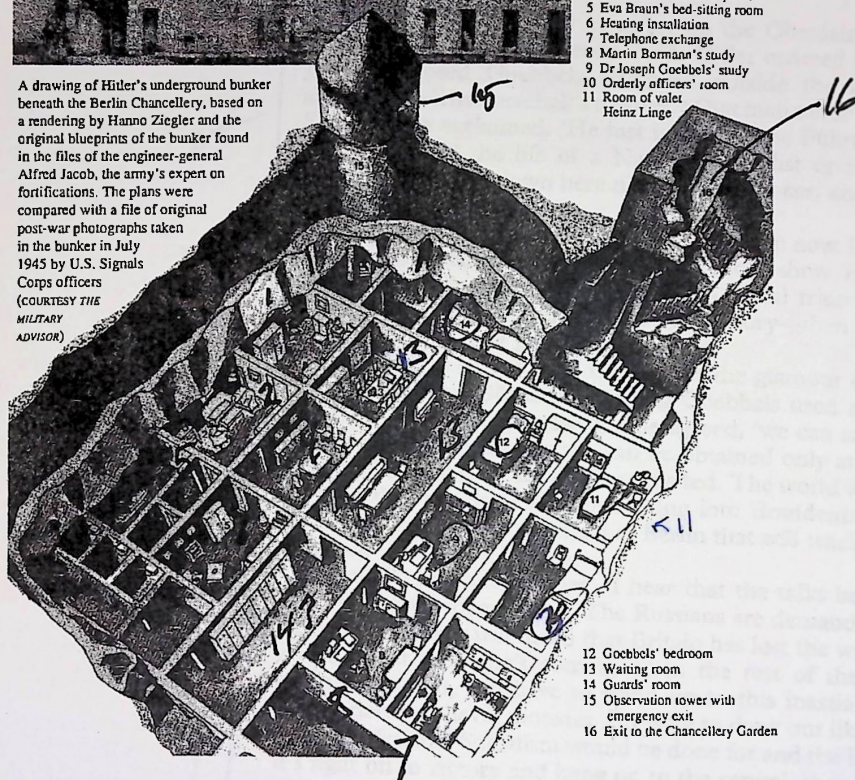


A drawing of Hitler's underground bunker beneath the Berlin Chancellery, based on a rendering by Hanno Ziegler and the original blueprints of the bunker found in the files of the engineer-general Alfred Jacob, the army's expert on fortifications. The plans were compared with a file of original post-war photographs taken in the bunker in July 1945 by U.S. Signals Corps officers (COURTESY THE MILITARY ADVISOR)

Hitler's Bunker

Key:

- 1 Hitler's bedroom
- 2 Hitler's living room
- 3 Conference room
- 4 Anteroom to Hitler's quarters
- 5 Eva Braun's bed-sitting room
- 6 Heating installation
- 7 Telephone exchange
- 8 Martin Bormann's study
- 9 Dr Joseph Goebbels' study
- 10 Orderly officers' room
- 11 Room of valet Heinz Linge



- 12 Goebbels' bedroom
- 13 Waiting room
- 14 Guards' room
- 15 Observation tower with emergency exit
- 16 Exit to the Chancellery Garden

$$\begin{array}{rcl}
 1.6 \text{ meter} & 1.6 & = 39 \\
 & & \underline{23} \\
 & & 62
 \end{array}$$

'Or Pappi from me!' the eight-year-old retorted, to everybody's delight. The children told Hitler they were all looking forward to the new soldiers who were going to chase the Russians away.⁵¹

'We're all waiting for Wenck,' he grimly advised an officer that day.⁵²

Doing what they could to lighten the descending gloom, Eva Braun was delicately made up and coifed and wore a different dress each day, while Magda had carefully brushed her own blonde hair and the hairpiece which she had elaborately woven in. Once she had a young S.S. doctor from the Voss Strasse bunker attend to her teeth; she liked this young man—Helmut Kunz—and found it easy to confide in him as the final days approached.

Hermann Göring, now in safety on the Obersalzberg, began acting as though Hitler were already dead. Hitler ordered his arrest.⁵³ Traudl Junge glimpsed Goebbels afterward outside the map room, raging about the Reichsmarschall's treason. 'That man never was a true National Socialist,' he exclaimed. 'He just basked in the Führer's reflected glory. He never lived the life of a National Socialist or idealist. It's thanks to him that we are down here now, in this bunker, and about to lose the war.'⁵⁴

Not that either he or Hitler had given up even now. Lorenz's shorthand notes of the remaining bunker conferences show Hitler on April 25 reasoning to Goebbels, 'I can only win a real triumph *here*,' meaning Berlin. 'If I do that—even just a moral victory—then it is at very least a way of saving face or gaining time.'⁵⁵

Unwilling to let anybody rob him of the glamour of sharing Hitler's fast-approaching Götterdämmerung Goebbels used every argument to keep him in the city. 'In Berlin,' he agreed, 'we can score a world-scale moral victory. Such a victory can be obtained only at the one point on which all the eyes of the world are riveted. The world will not take it half as hard that the Soviets are marching into Brandenburg as if they get Berlin. But if they are thrashed at Berlin that will teach the whole world a lesson.'

'If only!' responded Hitler. 'I hear that the talks between Eden and Molotov have broken down. The Russians are demanding the whole [of Poland]. And that will mean that Britain has lost the war. . . . I think,' he added, 'that the time's coming when the rest of them, out of sheer self-preservation, will have to stand up to this insatiable Moloch, this proletarian-bolshevik monster. If I were to duck out like a coward today . . . then National Socialism would be done for and the Reich with it. But if I fight on to victory and hang on to the capital, then maybe hope will spring in British and American breasts that it's possible to stand up to this whole peril, side by side with Nazi Germany, after all. And the only man for the job is me.'

'Leave this city,' emphasized Goebbels in this surreal conversation deep beneath the chancellery, 'and you lose the rest as well.'

Hitler speculated further. Might not the west now turn to him as the only force capable of holding back the bolshevik colossus? 'I would think'

Feb 23-26, 1945

it one thousand times more craven to finish myself off down on the Obersalzberg than to make a last stand and die in battle here.'

Reverting to his own leitmotif, Goebbels reminded him that the Russians too might yet prefer to strike a bargain with Nazi Germany. 'Once Stalin sees this trend among the western powers resulting from a German victory in Berlin, he may well say to himself, "If I'm not going to get the kind of Europe I had in mind, I'm just throwing the British and Germans into each other's arms. So let's cut a deal with the Germans."' He predicted that Stalin would shortly start a propaganda campaign against the Allies, accusing them of having ravaged Germany's cities with their air raids. 'He is a far better propagandist than the British,' said Goebbels.

Hitler was still pondering his own image in history. 'Better,' he growled, 'to fight honorably to the bitter end than to live on a few months or years in disgrace and dishonor.'

This was very much Goebbels' philosophy; he enlarged on this sepulchral theme, as though it were still an entirely abstract prospect. 'If the worse comes to the worst,' he mused, 'and the Führer dies an honorable death in Berlin, and Europe goes bolshevik, then in five years at most the Führer will have become a legendary figure and National Socialism a mythus sanctified by a last grand finale—and all of its mortal errors that are criticized today will have been expunged at one fell swoop.'

At a war conference later that day he remarked optimistically that the Anglo-American press had already coined the phrase 'Third World War' in uneasy anticipation of the coming clash with Russia. An impregnable Berlin might just be the last straw for the enemy coalition.

LATE on the twenty-sixth Luftwaffe general Robert von Greim arrived as Göring's successor. The renowned aviatrix Hanna Reitsch, who accompanied him, helped Magda with bedtime duties with the children. Once Hitler came in, took off his own golden party badge and pinned it onto Magda.⁵⁶ Goebbels often stood by his children's bedside, gazing at their sleeping forms. In November 1940, during the first British blitz on Berlin, he had seen them all sleeping in each others' arms like this in the cellar at Schwanenwerder—'all looking as sweet as little angels,' he wrote in that day's diary.⁵⁷ Once Traudl Junge heard the children through the door, singing in sixfold chorus. 'I went in,' she wrote, 'and found them sitting on their three bunk beds, tightly holding their ears so that the others did not interfere with their three-part song. And there was Hanna Reitsch singing with them and conducting.'⁵⁸ 'The children,' wrote Magda two or three days before the end, 'are wonderful. They manage all by themselves in these more than primitive conditions. . . . There's never a word of complaint or the trace of a tear from them. When the bunker trembles under the artillery bombardment the bigger children shield the smaller. Their presence here is a boon to us all, as they even coax a smile from the Führer now and again.'⁵⁹

Philosophizing in their bunker fastness, Hitler and Goebbels waited for those relieving armies. Lorenz heard Goebbels interrupt the war

conference on the twenty-seventh, 'Gau HQ reports that Wenck's group has linked up with our bridgehead at Potsdam.'

'The really crippling thing is,' said Hitler soon after, 'that one doesn't know for certain what is going on.' Phone calls dialed at random established which streets were now in Russian hands.

'God grant that Wenck gets here,' murmured Goebbels. 'Just suppose: Wenck gets to Potsdam, and the Soviets are right outside here in Potsdamer Platz!'

'And I'm not in Potsdam,' chimed in Hitler, 'but here in Potsdamer Platz.'

Later that day Soviet tanks flying swastikas broke right through to Wilhelm Platz before being shot down. Hitler, who had once directed army groups of a million soldiers and more, was listening to reports on the placing of individual howitzers and self-propelled guns in the streets above.⁶⁰ For a while he and Goebbels reminisced about the mistakes they now realized they had made in not liquidating their enemies in 1933. That was the hidden snag about being elected legally to office. In Vienna too, in 1938, the sheer peacefulness of the revolution had robbed them of the chance to liquidate all their enemies. Next time, they both resolved in this grotesque conversation, if there ever was a next time, they would not act Mr Nice Guy with their opponents.⁶¹

SHORTLY before dinner Magda collared the S.S. dentist Dr Helmut Kunz and asked him to help when the time came. She led him upstairs to where her children were preparing for bed, and introduced the Sturm-bannführer to them, without saying why. Goebbels looked in briefly and said goodnight to the children too. The dentist chatted easily with them all for a while, before returning to his bunker surgery.⁶²

On the twenty-eighth, as the bombardment increased, Greim left the bunker. Both the Goebbels parents took the opportunity to write a last letter to Harald in British captivity.⁶³ Magda's was defiant. 'Our magnificent ideology is all for naught,' she wrote, 'and with it everything beautiful, admirable, noble, and good that I have come to know in my life. Since there will be nothing to live for in the world that will endure after the Führer and National Socialism, I am taking the children with me. They are too good for the kind of life that will ensue, and a merciful God will understand me for delivering them.' The rest of the letter betrayed a no less hardy fanaticism. 'We have only one aim—to keep faith with the Führer unto death. That we are to be allowed to end our lives together with him is a favor from Fate that we never dared to hope for.'

Dr Goebbels' own farewell letter to his stepson was couched in the same unrepentant vein. 'We are confined to the Reich chancellery's Führer bunker, fighting for our lives and honor. . . . I think it unlikely we shall ever meet again.' Justifying the cruel pact that he had agreed with Magda, he continued, 'We do not have to be present in flesh and blood to have an impact on the future of our country. It may well be that you

April 29, 1945

are left alone to continue the family tradition. Germany will survive this terrible war, but only if our people have examples they can look up to for inspiration.' Seized by his own distorted sense of history, he added: 'The lies shall one day come tumbling down, and truth shall triumph over all.' 'Farewell, my dear Harald,' the letter ended.⁶⁴

*D.T.

THAT afternoon the news agencies announced that Heinrich Himmler had offered to the Allies the unconditional surrender of Germany.⁶⁵ To Hitler and Goebbels it now seemed obvious why there was still no news of the relieving armies. They had been betrayed.

The six children came as usual to see 'Uncle Führer' and stroke his Alsatian, Blondi; as they filed back to their room Schwägermann heard them call Eva Braun 'Frau Hitler' in passing, which rather startled him.⁶⁶ But Hitler had already revealed to Goebbels and his adjutants his intention to marry the mistress who had shared his isolation for fourteen years.⁶⁷ 'At her own wish,' Hitler dictated that night, 'she will meet death with me as my wife.'⁶⁸ He asked Goebbels to find an official empowered to solemnize the marriage—no easy charge, given that Russian snipers were now only a few hundred yards away. Presently however a short, slim, fair-haired official of thirty-four wearing the brown party uniform with a Volkssturm armband was brought down into the bunker.⁶⁹ Goebbels, Naumann, and Bormann acted as witnesses at the little ceremony in the tiny map room. Goebbels described it to Traudl Junge afterwards as 'very moving.'⁷⁰ The official quietly said, 'In the presence of the above-named witnesses I ask you, mein Führer, whether you are willing to take Miss Eva Braun in marriage.' Momentarily forgetful, she began signing with a 'B,' then crossed it out and wrote Eva Hitler instead.⁷¹ *April 29*

Afterward Hitler invited Goebbels, Magda, and Naumann to an intimate champagne dinner along with a few others.⁷² For a while he reminisced about World War One. Fourteen years before, he then recalled, he had been best man at the Goebbels wedding. 'What a contrast!' he wryly observed. 'For me, marriage and death are to be somewhat more closely linked in time.'⁷³ he confirmed once more that he did not intend to fall into Soviet hands alive. Death would be almost welcome, he said, now that so many had betrayed him.⁷⁴

Hitler went next door to dictate his political testament to Traudl Junge. After a while he called in Goebbels to discuss a new Cabinet. The most important question was who should succeed Hitler as head of state. Himmler had disqualified himself. Göring was in disgrace. For weeks Goebbels had been selflessly canvassing the name of Grand Admiral Dönitz—he was upright, military, and incorruptible.⁷⁵ Hitler agreed that the admiral should be the nominated as Reich president and supreme commander. He named the trusty Dr Goebbels himself as his successor as Reich chancellor, and Bormann as party minister. Werner Naumann would succeed Goebbels as propaganda minister.⁷⁶ The rest of this document, like a final shuffling of non-existent armies across long-obsolete maps, was a global settling of scores. Himmler, Göring, Speer,

*the language of legend is not a
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history—
the language
of leaders
is not a
reliable guide
to the moral
certifications
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historians will
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and even Ribbentrop—Hitler's 'second Bismarck'—were all dismissed from office. Probably at Goebbels' recommendation Hitler appointed Kari Hanke, still holding out in Breslau, as the new Reichsführer S.S. The testament ended with a final gratuitous outburst against the Jews and those international statesmen who had sold out to Jewish interests. Hitler rejoiced that the 'culprits' had paid for their sins, 'albeit by more humane means than war'—whatever that might mean. He signed at four A.M. and Goebbels and the others witnessed his signature.

The document had formally commanded Goebbels and his family to leave Berlin 'to take part in the nation's struggle.' But the minister knew that even as Reich chancellor his miserable existence would be prolonged only by as many weeks as would separate his capture and the opening of the gallows trapdoor beneath his feet. He exclaimed that as defense commissioner for Berlin he could not in conscience leave. Weeping profusely he rushed next door and interrupted Traudl Junge's typing of the document to dictate his own defiant 'annex' to it.

'For the first time in my life,' he declaimed, as her pencil flew across the pad, 'I must categorically refuse to obey an order of the Führer. My wife and children join me in this refusal.' It was not just that he could not bring himself to desert the Führer in his hour of need—I should appear for the rest of my life as a dishonorable turncoat and common scoundrel,' he wrote, with no right to the respect of his fellow citizens. 'In the delirium of treason which surrounds the Führer in these most critical days of the war there must be some people at least willing to abide by him unconditionally until death.' He ended, 'For this reason, together with my wife and on behalf of my children who are too young to speak for themselves but would, if old enough, approve this decision unreservedly, I utter my unalterable decision not to leave the Reich capital even if it falls, and at the side of the Führer to end a life which will be of no further value to myself if I cannot spend it in the service of the Führer and next to him.'

By five-thirty A.M. all the documents had been signed. Three couriers slipped out of the bunker at noon-fifteen, carrying copies to the outside world. Hitler told Goebbels that he would wait for word that at least one copy had reached its destination before departing on his own, more distant, journey. Shortly he was brought a news agency report describing the ugly end of Benito Mussolini and his mistress, 'hanging from the Standard Oil kiosk in [Milan's] Piazzale Quindici Martiri.' A dozen of the Duce's staff had been 'shot in the back' as well.⁷⁷

Hitler handed out cyanide capsules. Goebbels had sent Schwägermann back to the deserted No. 20 Hermann-Göring Strasse a few days earlier to fetch the 6.35-millimeter pistol with which he intended to kill himself; he kept this and his poison capsule with him all the time.⁷⁸ He gave to Heinz Lorenz copies of Hitler's testament and his own annex. 'Make for British- or American-occupied territory,' he briefed him, 'and publish the testaments as and when you think fit for the purpose of the historical record.'⁷⁹ Hitler held three more situation conferences that day. Sharp-

April 30, '44

shooters of the Russian 301st Guards Division were less than five hundred yards from the barricaded windows of the chancellery. At one-thirty A.M. on April 30, the Soviet High Command ordered heavy artillery to bear on the building. Within minutes the upper floors were ablaze. There were no more conferences. Fifty feet below ground Goebbels heard toward midday that the Russians had broken into the subway system between the ruined Kaiserhof and Potsdamer Platz, and had overrun the Tiergarten bordering on the chancellery.

At lunch time he glimpsed Hitler and Eva going into their private quarters. She was wearing a dark-blue dress with white trimmings. They invited only the two secretaries—but neither Goebbels partner—to join them. After a while Traudl Junge slipped out to see Magda and smoke a cigarette. Magda was in even more somber mood than Hitler. 'I prefer my children to die rather than survive as the objects of mockery and scandal,' she woodenly said. Around three-thirty P.M. Hitler and Eva emerged for one last time, shook hands wordlessly with Goebbels, and then retired, closing the padded doors behind them. Artur Axmann arrived to request orders for his young tank-killer squads. Goebbels intercepted the one-armed Hitler Youth leader and told him curtly that the Führer was 'seeing no one.'⁸⁰ In the old bunker Traudl Junge found the children waiting restlessly and giggling each time the bunker shook. She busied herself spreading bread and butter until a shot rang out, so close that their giggling stopped. It echoed through the concrete labyrinth, and Hellmut exclaimed, 'That sounded like a direct hit.'⁸¹

Otto Günsche went to investigate. He returned to the map room, where Goebbels and the others were waiting. 'Der Führer ist tot,' he announced⁸².

Thus, if only by fiat of the departed Führer, Joseph Goebbels became the last chancellor of the Third Reich. His brief dominion extended one mile from north to south, from the Weidendamm Bridge to Prinz-Albrecht Strasse, and rather less than that from east to west.

Epilogue: 'Ever at your Side'

After

REICH Chancellor Joseph Goebbels nodded to Otto Günsche, Hitler's broad-shouldered, blond S.S. 'bulldog,' to go ahead. Hitler had commanded Günsche to ensure that he and Eva were truly dead, and then to cremate their remains. They all trooped into Hitler's private sanctum. The sight of their Führer lifeless, the fountainhead until now of their own power and influence, slumped on the sofa with blood oozing from his head and mouth, had a numbing effect on them all. Eva's head rested on his shoulder. Ludwig Stumpfegger, Hitler's wiry young S.S. doctor, stooped briefly and confirmed that they were both dead, which relieved Günsche of a last distasteful duty with which Hitler had also charged him.¹

While the valet wrapped Hitler's corpse in a blanket and carried it out with Stumpfegger's assistance, Bormann picked up Eva's and followed them to the spiral staircase with Dr Goebbels a few paces behind. Schwägermann reported the scene to Magda. He ought not to have done this to us,' she wept.²

Upstairs Russian artillery was bracketing the building. Shrapnel was flying around the gardens. Storms of mortar dust and smoke whipped past. The little funeral party unceremoniously tipped the Führer's body into a hollow a few yards from the bunker exit where Goebbels remained, taking shelter. Hitler's corpse lay face upwards with Eva's next to him. A rude gust of wind hoisted her blue dress to reveal her garter-belt. Then, sodden down with the gasoline that Günsche and Hitler's chauffeur slopped out of five jerricans, the cloth wrapped itself limply round her limbs. Goebbels handed Günsche a match, a lighted rag was tossed onto the bodies, a sheet of flame enveloped the couple, and Bormann, Goebbels, Günsche, and the doctor raised their right arms in a farewell salute.

Goebbels led the way back down into the underground map room. Günsche and Axmann cleaned up in the death chamber. 'Bormann—Burgdorf—Krebs—Mohnke,' Goebbels ordered. 'Please come to an immediate situation conference.' (Wilhelm Burgdorf had succeeded Schmuntz; Krebs had replaced Guderian; Wilhelm Mohnke was the citadel's commandant.)

Hitler was dead. The Greatest Warlord of All Times had deserted them. For the last six years Germany had effectively been a Führer state without a Führer. Now Goebbels was Reich chancellor without a Reich.

April 30 - May 1, '45

'EVER AT YOUR SIDE' 529

The men clustered round as Goebbels told them of Hitler's testament appointing him.

The main point on his agenda was to secure Moscow's formal recognition for his new government before the Soviet High Command had crushed his tiny Reich.³ Together with Martin Bormann he dictated to secretary Gerda Christian a letter addressed to the Soviet military commander Marshal Zhukov, informing him that the Führer was dead and asking on behalf of the new government for an immediate ceasefire to enable the injured to be evacuated from the chancellery area.⁴ He detailed Krebs, a Russian speaker, to carry this letter to Zhukov's HQ under a flag of truce.⁵ But the preliminaries for this dangerous expedition took longer than planned. Else Krüger recalls that a radio signal went first to the Russian command, then a junior officer went to inquire if they would receive Krebs. It was close to midnight before the general set off, accompanied by a colonel, General Weidling's chief of staff, in an armored car flying a white flag.⁶

What was Goebbels' intent? Krebs' remarks to the Soviet officers, of which due record was taken, show that Goebbels had perceived only one hope for his own salvation: If Stalin would cut a deal with him at the expense of his western allies.

For several hours there was no word from Krebs. Goebbels and his men hung around the bunker's lowest level drinking endless cups of coffee and knocking back tots of schnapps. Goebbels had authorized a mass breakout for that night, and the cooks upstairs had packed all their pots and pans in anticipation; but now that Krebs was still absent the cooks had to unpack and prepare more meals. Upstairs meanwhile a burial party tried in the darkness to complete the cremation work, but the Hitler couple's corpses were scarcely charred. They were buried in a shell crater with the bodies of their two dogs laid out one layer above them as a decoy. Hitler's Alsatian Blondi had a collar-tag engraved 'Immer mit dir'—ever at your side.⁷

Several efforts were made to persuade the new chancellor even now to spare the lives of his six children. Axmann offered to take them out of Berlin. Goebbels went through the motions of consulting Magda, but returned and said he did not want the children to live to see him branded as a war criminal.⁸ Hitler's chauffeur made a similar offer. Goebbels told him that, if Krebs failed, his course was clear.⁹ The night passed but General Krebs did not return. Pondering what to do now, Goebbels asked Traudl Junge for a copy of Hitler's testament: But she had destroyed both her own shorthand and the remaining carbon copies.¹⁰

At seven-forty the next morning—it was now May 1, 1945—Martin Bormann sent a succinct message to Dönitz in Flensburg, northern Germany: 'Testament in force,' it said. 'I shall join you as rapidly as possible. My advice is to delay publication until then. BORMANN.'¹¹ At about the same time Goebbels was dressing punctiliously for this day's probable meeting with his Maker, choosing his finest underwear, his light-brown party uniform, dark silk socks, a brown silk necktie clasped

with a swastika badge, and the special orthopedic shoes.¹² The sounds of combat had almost died away—it was the Russian labor day.

TOWARD mid-morning the colonel came back from the Russian HQ, his uniform torn by barbed wire. He reported that General Krebs had been conducted to the Eighth Guards Army command post on the edge of Tempelhof airfield. The commanding officer, General Vassiliy Ivanovich Chuikov, had heard him out; but after conferring by phone with Marshal Zhukov the Russians had refused to discuss anything but unconditional surrender. There could be no talk of a limited armistice. Krebs had argued, as instructed, that it was in Stalin's interest to recognize the new Goebbels government at once. General Chuikov had repeated the Soviet refusal. Krebs had sent the colonel back to the chancellery with a Soviet signals team to run a field telephone line in to the bunker. But the cable had proved too short by several hundred yards.¹³

With his Führer dead, all the stuffing had gone out of Bormann. The colonel later said that while Bormann was falling apart, he saw no sign of fear in Goebbels. 'Goebbels was calm, clear spoken, and polite. I did notice red blotches in his face—they betrayed his emotions.'

Goebbels asked how long 'Berlin' could hold out.

'Two days, maximum,' replied the colonel. 'Just pockets of resistance after that.'

'Do you think Krebs has any chance of doing a deal?'

'I believe not,' said the colonel, and repeated: 'The Soviets are insisting on total surrender.'

'Never!' exclaimed Goebbels. 'I shall never, never, never give them that.'

Toward eleven A.M. he ordered: 'Fetch Krebs back. I want to hear what he has to say.'

The record shows that Krebs left the Soviet HQ at 1:08 P.M. It must have been after two o'clock before he arrived in the chancellery bunker. He found officers scurrying hither and thither, many smoking cigarettes and clutching bottles in their hands. Goebbels accused Krebs of having failed to state his terms forcefully enough to the Russians. Instead he had allowed them to take him in with worthless assurances about treating any prisoners according to the conventions.

That was his last official conference. For a while he sauntered up and down, softly whistling two Nazi marching songs.¹⁴ He had given up hope. Krebs' negative report had been the death sentence on the Goebbels family. He authorized the remaining bunker occupants and propaganda ministry staff to stage their mass breakout attempt after dark, around nine P.M. To Dönitz he sent this explicit message at three P.M.:

Führer deceased yesterday at 3:30 P.M. Testament of April 29 confers office of Reich president on you, office of Reich chancellor on Reich minister Dr Goebbels, office of party minister on Reichsleiter Bormann, office of Reich foreign minister on Reichsleiter Seyss-

May 1, '45

'EVER AT YOUR SIDE' 531

Inquart. Upon Führer's orders copies of the testament were dispatched to you, to Field Marshal Schörner, and conveyed out of Berlin for public safekeeping. Reichsleiter Bormann will try to get to you today to explain the situation. Manner and time of announcement to public and troops are at your own discretion. Acknowledge receipt. GOEBBELS.¹⁵

He and Bormann sent an officer to tell the Russians that their terms were refused and to repudiate any assurances that General Krebs might have given them.¹⁶

Magda phoned her young S.S. dentist friend in the other bunker. 'Time's running out,' she said.

Kunz hurried over, though not bringing any 'medicines' with him yet. He arrived outside the Goebbels' quarters as Axmann was asking, 'Have you decided, Herr Reich minister?' Magda, who also momentarily forgot to refer to her husband as Chancellor, replied: 'The gauleiter of Berlin and his family are staying in Berlin and will die here.'

'Doctor,' said Goebbels in a matter-of-fact way to the dentist. 'I'd be grateful if you would help my wife to put the children to sleep.'¹⁷

It was about five P.M.¹⁸ Magda had changed into a yellow and brown knitted dress; she had her platinum-blond hair swept up, and held in place with hairpins and clips. Anxious to get the awful deed behind her she plucked at the dentist's sleeve. 'Our troops are pulling out,' she said. 'The Russians may get in at any moment. We've got to hurry.' She selected a syringe from a cupboard, and handed it to Kunz. 'Morphine,' she explained, and led the way to the other bunker.

'Not to worry,' Magda said brightly to her children, giving each a chocolate. 'The doctor here is going to give you each a little jab that all the other children and soldiers are getting.'¹⁹

That was all. Choking, she turned and left the room. Rach the chauffeur stepped in briefly to say good-bye to the children: Lying, he told them he was going on a journey. Helga, the eldest, wearing a light-blue night-dress with lace trimmings, would be first. Hands trembling, the dentist began to inject the narcotics—into Helga, twelve, Hilde, eleven, then nine-year-old Hellmut, who was wearing white pajamas decorated with a turquoise and red flowered pattern, and the three little sisters Holde, Hedda, and Heide, aged eight, seven, and four.²⁰ It took nearly ten minutes.

'We'll have to wait ten minutes until they're asleep,' the dentist told Magda outside. But there was one hitch—he refused to administer the actual poison himself. She snapped at him to fetch Dr Stumpfegger.²¹

Three or four minutes later the S.S. surgeon found her in the children's room silently watching over her drugged family. Stumpfegger, a family man himself, meticulously laid out six ampoules—each a phial of bluish glass with a red dot in the middle. While Magda gently prized open each mouth, Stumpfegger gingerly crushed the phial with his long, slender fingers and tipped it and its contents in. Young Hellmut still had the wire

brace around his upper teeth—they had always protruded just like his father's.²²

She would have had a heart of ice not to be riven asunder by what she had done. She rushed outside as soon as the sixth child, the youngest, had been dispatched and threw her arms around Günter Schwägermann's neck. The burly six-footer steadied her in his strong arms for a moment. Stumpfegger came out and nodded to her meaningfully. She fainted in their arms.²³ When Rach came in, a few minutes later, he found her closing the dead children's eyes and kissing each one tenderly on the forehead. 'It's so wretched for me,' she said, sobbing loudly. 'It was so painful bringing each one into the world.'²⁴ They led her downstairs to her husband. 'It's done,' she said. 'The children are dead. Now for ourselves.'

IN the other bunker Günsche and Mohnke briefed the several hundred people who had gathered for the breakout. The women buckled on helmets and side arms too.²⁵

At first the new chancellor instructed Rach and Schwägermann to bury the children's, Magda's, and his own bodies properly in the gardens; reluctant to risk lives needlessly in such an effort, the adjutant talked him out of it and promised to see that the bodies were completely cremated.²⁶ Goebbels told Naumann that he and Magda would kill themselves as soon as the mass breakout began: 'I don't want to survive just to put my signature on a surrender document,' he said.²⁷ It was 7:55 P.M. when Naumann returned to the ruined ministry building.²⁸

For the next half-hour Joseph Goebbels paced restlessly up and down smoking, like a party host discreetly waiting for his last guests to leave. Hitler's remaining staff said their farewells. He pulled a wry grin at Traudl Junge and wished her well. 'You might just make it,' he appraised. He told Hans Baur, the pilot, 'If you should reach Dönitz, tell him of our life down here these last few days.' At eight-fifteen he called in Schwägermann, as the last squads of men and women, bristling with machine pistols, carbines, and grenades, made their way past to the breakout assembly point in the coal bunker, and told him, 'We've got to hurry now, there's very little time.' He added, 'Schwägermann, this was the worst treachery of all. The generals have betrayed our Führer. It's the end of everything.' Again he implored his adjutant, 'You *will* burn our bodies—are you capable of that?' He gave him the silver-framed Hitler portrait that had stood on his desk for nearly twenty years. Magda took the S.S. Hauptsturmführer's hand and said, 'If you ever see Harald again, greet him from us and say that we went honorably to our deaths.'²⁹

Schwägermann directed Rach to fetch the gasoline. The stocky, dark-complexioned driver returned with an orderly, probably S.S. Scharführer Ochs, carrying several canisters and a small swastika flag.

Magda turned to her husband. 'Don't let's die down here in the bunker,' she said.

'No, of course not. We'll go up into the garden.'

With a greater sense of history than of the realities of the situation outside, Magda said: 'Not the garden. Wilhelm Platz—that's where you have spent your working life.'

He went to the coat-rack, took his trench coat, adjusted the dark-blue spotted scarf round his neck, carefully pulled on his yellow leather gloves, and donned his light-gray snap-brimmed fedora. He put the pistol into his pocket, offered Magda his arm. The couple emerged effortlessly from their room and passed Schwägermann and Ochs as though already ghosts.

THE rest can only be pieced together from the uncertain evidence of the Soviet autopsies.³⁰ These afford no real clue to who did first or even how. The Russians found the splinters of a poison phial in the right side of Dr Goebbels' jaw. Magda too had swallowed poison. Like Hitler, he had probably also shot himself. Schwägermann certainly heard one shot—others heard two; on Schwägermann's orders Ochs fired two *coups de grâce* into the motionless bodies.³¹ The S.S. officers made only cursory attempts to burn the remains. A Walther pistol was found near them a few days later when the Russians tipped the two corpses onto a red and gold door ripped out of the chancellery building. The corpses were loaded onto a truck and driven away.

There was one feature about the little Doctor, even in death, that caught the Soviet pathologist's attention. His fists were raised, as though spoiling for a fight.³² Perhaps, somewhere, for Dr Joseph Goebbels the dialectical battle was already beginning anew.