

THE BANKRUPT

THE "INSTRUCTION" TO HEYDRICH

That winter of 1941/42 Hermann Göring heard rumors of mass killings in the east.

Given his control of the Forschungsamt and the Four-Year Plan, it would be surprising if he had not heard earlier. Pathetic transports of Jews deported from the west had clogged the railroad lines into Poland and eastern Europe, and his papers would show him several times that spring discussing "transport bottlenecks in Upper Silesia" with Hitler.

History now teaches that a significant proportion of those deported—particularly those too young or infirm to work—were being brutally disposed of on arrival. The surviving documents provide no proof that these killings were systematic; they yield no explicit orders from "above," and the massacres themselves were carried out by the local Nazis (by no means all of them German) upon whom the deported Jews had been dumped. That they were ad hoc extermination operations is suggested by such exasperated outbursts as that of Governor-General Hans Frank at a Cracow conference on December 16, 1941: "I have started negotiations with the aim of sweeping them [further] to the east. In January there is to be a big conference in Berlin on this problem . . . under SS Obergruppenführer Heydrich [the "Wannsee

Conference" of January 20, 1942]. At any rate a big Jewish exodus will begin. . . . But what's to become of the Jews? Do you imagine they're going to be housed in neat estates in the Baltic provinces? In Berlin they tell us: What's bugging you—we've got no use for them either, liquidate them yourselves!"

It is doubtful that "Berlin" meant Hitler, let alone Göring: The Führer was at the Wolf's Lair, directing the historic rearguard action against the Russian winter offensive, while the Reichsmarschall's presence in the capital was equally rare. His attention was already focused on a two-week jaunt to Italy at the end of January. No, "Berlin" more likely meant the party—o Himmler, Heydrich, and the SS.

On the last day of July 1941 Göring had signed that relatively innocuous *Auftrag* (instruction) at Heydrich's request. In full, it read:

Amplifying the task assigned to you by [my] decree of January 24, 1939, of solving the Jewish problem as rapidly and as conveniently as possible by emigration or evacuation, I herewith instruct you to make all necessary preparations in an organizational, logistical, and material context for an overall unraveling (*Lösung*) of the Jewish problem within Germany's sphere of influence in Europe.

Where this will impinge upon the purviews of other government departments, these are to be consulted.

I further instruct you to lay before me shortly a comprehensive draft of the organizational, logistical, and material advance preparations for carrying out the desired final solution of the Jewish problem.

Göring had no reason to believe that he had signed anything but a routine administrative directive expanding Heydrich's existing powers to the more recently occupied eastern territories. It is worth bearing in mind as his defense counsel argued in his final plea for clemency on October 4, 1946, that while Göring had undoubtedly initiated the economic sanctions against the Jews, it remained unproven that he had even known of their "biological extermination." His earlier decree to Heydrich had been dated January 24, 1939, at a time when nobody was contemplating extermination as a "solution." Moreover the ominous phrase "final solution" would become synonymous with extermination only later, and even then only in Himmler's intimate circle.

History cannot, however, exonerate Göring from blame. Anxious not to be toppled from his post as heir-apparent—one stroke of the pen would have sufficed—he was careful not to probe too deeply into Himmler's methods.

Thirty miles from Carinhall, recalled Dr. von Ondarza, was the Oranienburg concentration camp. "Göring never once set foot in one," said Ondarza. "He just didn't have the guts. It was characteristic of him," Göring's aide added, "that when the going got rough he just scuttled off to Paris or Italy." No, Göring carefully eschewed any criticism of the SS. "Whoever attacked Himmler," he would explain evasively in May 1945, when taxed with these atrocities, "was eliminated. Besides, he lied to me." Prudence replaced propriety in Göring's demeanor: In August 1942 Himmler wrote to the Air Ministry soliciting assistance with unspecified low-pressure and low-temperature experiments on condemned prisoners at the Dachau concentration camp. Neither Göring nor his Staatssekretär inquired into what kind of experiments were involved. "I *did* tell Göring," Milch confided to his private diary four years later. "Göring was against any collaboration but insisted on a very polite tone toward Himmler."

In fact, Göring went out of his way to cultivate the Reichsführer's friendship. The records show Himmler writing to Chief Forester Scherping on September 12, 1942, thanking him for Göring's invitation to shoot a "very fine Rominten stag." When Herbert Göring—by now manager of the Berlin office of United Steel—incurred Hermann's wrath in 1943, the Reichsmarschall would write asking Himmler to strip Herbert of his rank as honorary SS Obersturmbannführer, and invite Hitler to pass a law depriving "unworthy" people of their famous names. And when Göring's brother Albert (who picturesquely insisted under American interrogation, "I am the *real* brother of Hermann Göring!") reported rumors from a Dr. Max Winkler about the machine-gunning of Jews in Poland, the Reichsmarschall ingeniously forwarded the letter to the SS to attend to.

In the winter of 1941–42 he did send a senior Forschungsamt official, Ernst-Friedrich Scholer, to investigate a rumor of atrocities in the Ukraine. Scholer returned with snapshots of men pointing rifles downward into large pits. In such disturbing instances, Göring regularly allowed himself to be fobbed off, as he related three years later.

I heard, for example, that a large load of Jews left for Poland during the winter and that some of them froze to death in their vehicles. I heard of these things mostly from the ranks of my employees and from the people. When I made inquiries, I was told that such things would not happen again—it was claimed that the trains had been misrouted.

Then there was some talk about *Vernichtungstruppen* [destruction squads]. What I was told was this—that there were many diseased people in these camps, and that many died of epidemics. These squads had the job of taking the corpses to a crematorium where they would be cremated.

scene

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Göring's role as evidenced in the archival documentation is clear. Since November 1938 official Nazi policy had been to extrude the Jewish community from Greater Germany. In January 1939, as chief of the Four-Year Plan, Göring had put Reinhard Heydrich in charge. By mid-1940 some two hundred thousand Jews had emigrated, often under the most harrowing and humiliating circumstances. Since few countries were willing to accept them, the idea had emerged in Berlin of resettling all of Europe's Jews eventually in Madagascar, a large French colonial island where no neighbors could molest them, and where they could not intrude upon their neighbors, either. But Hitler's vast military victories in 1939 and 1940 had brought three million more Jews under the Nazi aegis and, writing on June 24, 1940, to Foreign Minister Ribbentrop, Heydrich had suggested adopting what he termed "a geographical (territoriale) final solution" instead—shipping the millions of Jews overland eastward out of Europe, rather than overseas to Madagascar. Twelve months later *Barbarossa* provided the necessary territories, and Göring naively endorsed the Auftrag that Heydrich had drafted that rainy evening in Berlin. It was a document that Lord Halifax would have described as "platitudinous," but the SS Obergruppenführer made liberal use of it. Issuing invitations to the interdepartmental conference to be held—as Hans Frank had urged—in Berlin's leafy Wannsee suburb, Heydrich had prefaced each letter with the words, "On July 31, 1941, the Reichsmarschall of the Greater German Reich instructed me—" etc., and he attached a photocopy of the document with Göring's signature.

In the entire files of Göring's Stabsamt and other bureaus there is no evidence that Göring knew of Heydrich's ultimate intentions. At the Wannsee conference on January 20, 1942, he would be represented by the sharp-witted, hard-working Staatssekretär Erich Neumann, of the Four-Year Plan, but the actual proceedings were more obscure than might be supposed from the conference's subsequent notoriety. "Gruppenführer Heydrich told the conference," reported Ribbentrop's representative, the arrestingly named Martin Luther, "that Reichsmarschall Göring's Auftrag to him had been issued at the Führer's behest and that the Führer had now approved evacuating the Jews to the east instead of emigration as a solution." What was actually happening in "the east" was never discussed at the meeting.

The ministries had only to assent to measures specifically within their own ambit. On January 24, Fritz Görnert of Göring's Stabsamt notified the SS, "The Reichsmarschall has no objections to the proposal by [Heydrich] to put signs on Jewish dwellings." Heydrich himself was studiously vague about his ulterior aims. Asking the SS personnel office to take cognizance of the Göring Auftrag, he added merely, "Preparatory measures have been put in hand." Writing to Luther about the same Göring document in February, he asked him to delay producing the draft proposals that the Reichsmarschall

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2) they are
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had called for until further discussions. In any case, Heydrich would be assassinated a few weeks later, before any such document could be drafted.

The documentary record shows that the initiative for specific atrocities came from Nazi officials in the field. Even Hitler's own role is thrown into question by recently discovered documents, and verbatim conference transcripts show Göring to have been aware of the Führer's less rigid attitude. Two days after visiting Hitler on July 4, 1942, he presided over the first session of the new Reich Research Council. Here Göring expressed anger that although the Führer had expressly forbidden it, Jewish scientists were being taken off vital research:

I've just briefed the Führer about this. We have exploited one Jew in Vienna for two years, and another in the field of photography, because they've got things we need of the utmost value to us at this time. It would be madness to say, "He'll have to go! Of course he's a great researcher, a fantastic brain, but he's got a Jewish wife and can't be at the university, and so on."

The Führer has made similar exceptions all the way down to operetta level.

A month later Göring could have heard Rosenberg telling the assembled gauleiters this, according to the stenographic record: "The solution of the Jewish problem continues apace . . . It can only be solved by rigorous and ruthless force, [*Storms of applause.*] We ought not to rest content with Jews being shipped from one state to another, leaving Jewish ghettos here and there. Our aim must be the old one: the Jewish problem in Europe and in Germany will not be solved until there is not one Jew left on the European continent. [*Lively applause.*]"

Such harsh words were not, of course, uttered in a vacuum. The whole trend was toward illegal and brutal modes of war—toward innocenticide on a grand scale. Violent air raids had resumed. The partisan warfare developing in Russia was barbarous beyond belief. Millions were starving too. At the same conference Göring evidently asked what food the Jews in Riga were getting, because the local Nazi official there, Reich Commissar Hinrich Lohse, corrected him: "Only a small fraction of the Jews [of Riga] still live." He continued, no less ambiguously, "Tens of thousands are gone."

"All cruelty," protested Hermann Göring, first confronted with evidence of the Nazis' atrocities, "was abhorrent to me. I can name many people whom I have helped, even Communists and Jews. My wife was so kind—I really have to be grateful for that. I often thought, if only the Führer had a sensible wife who would have said to him, 'Here's a case where you can do some

D.T. on this

*The exaltation
of being in
a new
world.*

*— Not since
Cortez had
burned the
ships that
brought
him & his
conquistadors
to Mexico.*

good, and here's another, and this one—' That would have been better for everyone. It was very depressing for me."

Göring's policy on the Jewish relocation program after Hitler's invasion of Poland is only rarely glimpsed in the archives. His brother Albert had asked him over dinner once during those months, and Hermann had replied that he favored awarding a large area of Poland (with Warsaw as its capital) to the Jews, who would be collected there from all over Germany, Austria, and Czechoslovakia—a huge, autonomous ghetto. No other Final Solution ultimately evolving in the east is even hinted at in the thousands of pages of Görnert's files as Göring's office chief, let alone in the Air Ministry or Four-Year Plan files. Görnert's files reflect the Reichsmarschall, albeit often cautiously, investigating every instance of Nazi heavyhandedness reported to him. He forwarded the grosser cases of excess to Philipp Bouhler for review. Bouhler's staff, however, usually rejected the complaints. In one case, when the Ministry of the Interior classified Baroness Elisabeth von Stengl as a Jew, Göring's staff redirected her indignant protest to the bureau. In vain—she was "relocated" (*umgesiedelt*). Göring again protested on her behalf, which drew a reply from Adolf Eichmann himself, dated October 7, 1942: "As her manner appeared to have become intolerable," it coldly explained, "the instruction was issued for her to be relocated as soon as possible to the Old Age Ghetto at Theresienstadt, regardless of her case pending at the Reich Genealogical Bureau (*Reichssippenamt*)." (The Baroness, born June 6, 1900, was only forty-two.)

Göring appears not to have suspected the character of Theresienstadt, as a showpiece "clearing station" through which elderly Jews passed on their final journey to "the east." On May 22, 1942, the Gestapo's chief (Heinrich Müller himself) had written him about a Jew, Hans Martin Manasse, and his wife, Rosa Cohn. Görnert replied on June 17, "May I draw your attention to the Reichsmarschall's handwritten comments and request a brief word from you before any further steps are taken re Manasse/Cohn to enable the Reichsmarschall to pronounce finally on this case." On September 17, Görnert brought Müller's decision to Göring, who directed his aide to notify the Gestapo official "that the Reichsmarschall requests that this couple should be deported together to Theresienstadt (*Judenstadt*)." The Reichsmarschall, Görnert continued, had notified Himmler, and he added, "The deportation to Theresienstadt is to be carried out as soon as possible and the Jewish couple are to be enabled to stay there as long as this town is made available for this. The Reichsmarschall asks to be informed as soon as they have been deported." Göring appears to have known of Auschwitz only as the gigantic new synthetic rubber plant built there by Albert Speer. At a central-planning session on July 2, 1943, Pili Körner would mention the current plans to expand Auschwitz's output to twenty-eight thousand tons of rubber.

There is one clue that by 1942 Göring had learned of Hitler's systematic "mercy killing" of the population of Germany's mental institutions, because

on May 6, he instructed Görnert to write a letter in these terms to Heydrich: "The Reichsmarschall desires that the high command be required to order that—adopting Obergruppenführer Heydrich's own proposal—Wehrmacht soldiers who are in the future committed to institutions for the mentally ill shall be placed in institutions exclusively reserved for soldiers, so that the said institution attains the character of a military hospital."

Besides Philipp Bouhler, who ran the euthanasia "mercy killing" operation, it was Martin Bormann who forced through these less merciful campaigns. "Bormann," testified Göring, squirming under American interrogation in September 1945, "would make everything three times as bad, in order to please [Hitler] . . . Bormann used to walk around with his pockets stuffed with notepaper. He used to take down everything the Führer said, even if it was never intended to be taken seriously." By March 1942 Göring would be fighting tooth and nail to keep Bormann out of his own operations. Across one document on economic policy that Dr. Robert Ley submitted to Hitler—through Bormann—Göring scrawled, "This is an area where decisions until now have been solely in my hands. I recently mentioned to the Führer that unless I am informed and in agreement then no 'Führer decisions' are to be requested on any domain of mine except by me in person."

But the fanatics no longer heeded Hitler either. "Reichsminister Lamers," recorded the Staatssekretär to the minister of justice in the spring of 1942, "told me the Führer has repeatedly declared to him he wants to see the solution of the Jewish problem postponed until after the war." But the "solution" had already begun, and Göring, as Hitler's surviving successor, would be called to account for it.

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THE THOUSAND- BOMBER RAID

As 1942 began Hitler's armies in Russia were in crisis. From the Crimea and Kharkov northward to Kursk, Moscow, and Leningrad, the starving, ill-equipped, and frozen German troops could barely withstand the furious onslaught. Hitler changed his army generals all along the front, but he had only praise for the Luftwaffe commanders like the hard-bitten General von Richthofen.

Göring willingly joined in his Führer's lashing of the army generals. Meeting Hitler in sub-zero temperatures at the Wolf's Lair on January 2, 1942, he marveled at the way the dictator halted the army's stampede and consolidated the crumbling front lines. "I have rarely seen such greatness," he told Mussolini, visiting Italy later that month.

In the last days of the old year, Lieutenant General Hans von Sponeck, acting against orders, had abandoned the peninsula of Kerch in the Crimea. The Reichsmarschall took it upon himself to punish Sponeck, which aroused indignation when he told his staff about it at Rominten the next day. "You can't dish out orders from on high," observed Luftwaffe operations chief Hoffmann von Waldau afterward, "and then make somebody else carry the can when things go wrong." Göring disagreed, and convened a court-martial at Hitler's headquarters. He did not have things all his own way, even then.

Jan '42

"The Reichsmarschall," Heinrich Himmler would later recall, "had the utmost difficulty in getting his fellow judges—all [army] generals—to agree to sentence this coward to death." In this instance even Hitler felt Göring had gone too far, and commuted the death sentence to fortress arrest.

Göring's merciless stance—more Catholic, it seemed, than the pope—strengthened Waldau's resolve to get out. "For three years," he wrote privately on January 3, "I have held down this job with almost total self-denial. I have labored to the best of my conscience and ability. I have gladly borne the burden that meticulous devotion to duty and permanent mental servitude have thrust upon me, but in the long run that burden, coupled with the knowledge that I bear the ultimate responsibility for events without the slightest means of influencing them, entitles me to the view that three years is enough."

Göring continued his vendetta against the army. Meeting Hitler again on the ninth, he criticized the army's feeble winter preparations. He had had to turn over three million sets of winter clothing to the army. Warning that the war was going to last into yet another winter, Göring recommended stockpiling fur hats and goggles now. "Göring told me," Hitler told his staff, impressed, "that when he goes hunting he always takes heat packs with him like the ones we've been finding on Soviet soldiers."

As the war's problems became more intractable, Göring took refuge in trivia and minor postwar problems. British code-breakers intercepted his instruction, passed to troops on the Russian front, that all air-force personnel summoned to his or the Führer's presence "must be free of lice." His leather-bound diary shows him at Carinhall on January 23, 1942, discussing with Nazi labor leader Robert Ley plans for postwar pensions that would embrace even the lowest income groups, and a "suggestion for a luncheon where party veterans can meet and talk to me." Another diary note, "Assistance for evacuees," reflects, however, the one nightmare that would not go away with the dawn: the RAF's bombing offensive. Nor did it escape his attention that when he now left East Prussia for Berlin, one after another, sixteen locomotives pulling his train broke down in the cold. For his next conference with Hitler he dictated this reminder: "Responsibility for provision of sufficient locomotives in good time for winter 1942-43, capable of trouble-free operation at temperatures below -40°C."

|| scene

Hitler sent him down to see Benito Mussolini and reassure him about Germany's will to fight on. After taking explicit instructions from Hitler on what to say in Rome, Göring departed aboard *Asia* taking valet, nurse, doctor, and a multitude of staff officers, including his nephew Lieutenant Göring, Görnnert, and Bodenschatz with him. The hapless Hoffmann von Waldau, scandalized by this new extravagance, cynically recorded that Göring made "considerable preparations, mainly of a sartorial nature" for the jaunt. He added, "How I hate to go swanning off at times like these!" Waldau's tender

gaze was spared the more scandalous displays of opulence. Becoming restless once during the journey Göring sent for the pot of diamonds, tipped them out and counted them, then paraded them across the table, mixed them up, and calmed down completely.

In Rome the Reichsmarschall made no attempt to consult with Italy's foreign minister, Ciano (who learned of this diamonds-fetish episode)—“In fact,” wrote Ciano in his diary, “ever since we bestowed that [diamond] Collar on von Ribbentrop, [Göring] has adopted an aloof air toward me.” “We are having a hard time,” Göring had whispered to Mussolini at the station, alluding to the army's difficulties in Russia. Meeting again more formally, he blamed this crisis on the sub-Napoleonic temperatures. “Such difficulties will not recur,” he promised. “Whatever happens in the coming year, the Führer will halt and take up winter quarters in good time.”

As for North Africa, the main problem was that of supplies. Göring loftily suggested that Italian submarines transport forty thousand tons of supplies a month to Rommel. The “bloated and overbearing” Reichsmarschall got on Ciano's nerves. Dining at the Excelsior on February 4, Göring talked to Ciano only of his rings and jewelry. Accompanying him to the station, Ciano—who appears to have known about such things—reflected that Göring's full-length sable coat was what a high-grade call girl might wear to the opera.

*D.T.
our investiture
in diamonds*

A serious challenge to the Reichsmarschall's authority confronted him soon after his return to East Prussia. On Sunday morning, February 9, the munitions minister, Fritz Todt, perished in a plane crash at the Wolf's Lair. With barely a flicker of grief, Göring hastened over to demand Todt's ministry for himself, only to learn that Hitler had already selected his thirty-six-year-old chief architect, Albert Speer, for the job. In terms of blind ambition and pathological zest for intrigue, Göring had now met his match. When Milch brought Speer to him, Göring blandly emphasized that his new job was merely the production of *army* munitions. Milch, he continued, would make a better munitions minister and would shortly call a big conference of arms industrialists at the Air Ministry. “The Ministry of Munitions,” he reminded Speer some weeks later, “was set up at my own suggestion purely to offset the shortcomings of the Army Weapons Office.” Todt had agreed not to trespass on the Reichsmarschall's Four-Year Plan, and now Göring invited Speer to sign a similar agreement. Realizing immediately what Göring was up to, Speer raced back to the Wolf's Lair and persuaded Hitler to endorse him personally as the new minister. Hitler complied in a two-hour speech delivered to the arms industrialists in the Reich Cabinet room—Göring was informed that his own presence was not necessary.

For years afterward, Göring seethed over his humiliation at Speer's hands. No slouch in the art of power politics, Speer initially flattered and fawned upon Göring, inviting Göring to appoint him as “general plenipotentiary for arms production in the Four-Year Plan” (to enable him to draw upon Göring's

still considerable residual authority). He also won Keitel's arms chief, the stiff-necked, bureaucratic General Georg Thomas, to the idea of creating "a small body of men gathered around the Reichsmarschall to direct central planning policy." Sitting on this new central-planning body, Speer and Milch would allocate all raw materials. It effectively spelled the end of the Four-Year Plan. That agency now became a hollow shell, represented in Central Planning only by the witless Pili Körner. The Plan retained control only over manpower allocation, through Labor Commissioner Fritz Sauckel, and here Göring freely interfered. When Sauckel, searching for two million more workers, drew attention to the untapped reserves of female labor in the Reich, Göring objected: Some women, he averred, were born to work, while others were not. It was like plough horse and racehorse. "Reichsmarschall Göring," Himmler was informed, "also says that ladies who are the bearers of our culture should not be exposed to the silly talk and insolence of the simpler womenfolk." Oblivious of Germany's crucial manpower shortages, Göring would allow his own private office and personal staff to grow to 104 people in September 1942.

Again visiting Paris during March 1942, Göring bought half a dozen paintings, a terra-cotta figurine of Madame du Barry as Diana, and a vase. He toured the Left Bank dealers. Hofer totted up the purchases and handed the list to Fräulein Limberger aboard Göring's train on March 15.

During his absence abroad, Milch had drawn up tables showing that Germany was now producing 850 airplanes per month, of which only 314 were fighters. The air staff's current requirement was 360 fighters—itsself a ludicrously low figure. "Herr Reichsmarschall," Milch said, tackling Göring at Rominten on March 21, "if you were to say *thirty-six hundred* fighters, then I should be bound to state that against America and Britain combined that figure is still too few!"

"I shouldn't know what to do with more than three hundred sixty," retorted General Jeschonnek, baffled.

Milch suggested they double the figure to 720. Göring paused, agonizing as ever whenever a firm decision was called for. Outside, the temperature was 26 degrees below freezing. In mid-discussion, so the minutes record, "the Reichsmarschall went for a sleigh ride at 5:25 P.M. Conference resumed at 6:55 P.M. . . ." He told Milch to go ahead. Two years later Milch would be manufacturing three thousand fighter planes a month.

As though on the devil's cue, a few days later the British fire-bombing of Europe's ancient cities began in mortal earnest. RAF Bomber Command now had orders to attack the population centers rather than the Nazi factories. Earlier in March 1942 they had bombed Paris, killing eight hundred Frenchmen. Hitler's first instinct had been to demand reprisals against London—"That's what counts," he raged at Göring. "The maximum shock and terror—not the economic damage inflicted." By March 21, however, he had

changed his mind, and when Göring inquired after the reason, Jeschonnek could only explain, "The Führer doesn't want to provoke attack on Germany's cities so long as the British keep to their present small scale and we aren't able to deliver annihilating blows in the west."

The German hesitation went unrewarded. One night a week later, 230 British bombers burned the heart out of medieval Lübeck, killing three hundred people. On the morning of that raid, March 28, Göring had again met his sleazy art "curator" Walter Hofer at Carinhall. The day's typed agenda was crowded with items remote from the terrors of mass fire raids—the acquisition of paintings of Stefan Lochner, Italian art treasures from Count Contini, Alois Miedl, and his three Cézanne watercolors and a Cézanne landscape, and notes about "two little figurines from Brussels," and "[Emil] Renders still has some sculptures." The day's agenda also mentions the Dutch Jew Nathan Katz (whom Göring was smuggling across to Switzerland with his wife and children in return for valuable paintings deposited with the Swiss consul at The Hague) and Katz's paintings by Van Gogh and Van Dyck.

While the cities of Hitler's new empire began to burn, the Reichsmarschall indulged his caprices. He regarded himself as above and beyond the law. When Milch celebrated his fiftieth birthday at the end of March 1942, Göring gave him a valuable tapestry and ordered the media to give prominence to "photographs portraying the Reichsmarschall and Field Marshal Milch." Milch was tactless enough to ask, "Where was the tapestry snitched?" Adopting the double standard that comes so easily to those in power, Göring was ruthless in campaigning against corruption among others. He forbade Professor Messerschmitt to set aside scarce aluminum for postwar ventures; he prohibited Daimler-Benz from manufacturing twelve-cylinder limousines for other Nazi leaders. But Görmnert's files bear witness to the substantial orders that Göring placed for personal radio sets, refrigerators, and deep freezers—all virtually unobtainable in wartime Germany—for his family and benefactors. SS Gruppenführer Otto Ohlendorf learned of the priceless trinkets showered on Göring by Felix Schüller, head of the Reich Association (*Reichsgruppe*) of Handicrafts; when the Ministry of Economics opened an investigation, Göring's office impounded its dossier.

"Göring," Hitler chided him that March, worried about the top soldier's image, "do you think it looks good to be photographed with a pipe? What would you say to a statue with a cigar in your mouth?" More caustic comments were sometimes heard from the public at large. The Gestapo reported that cinema audiences also grumbled about Göring's chunky cigars at a time when by contrast, they themselves were fobbed off with noxious tobacco substitutes like lime-blossom leaves. The newsreel audiences remarked too upon his uniforms—always spotless white at a time when they could not buy soap powder—and criticized his obesity at a time when "the Russians were having to eat grass." On April 2, one SS Gruppenführer complained

schme?

to Himmler that Emmy Göring had invited eighty generals' wives to coffee, "and the table fairly groaned under the weight of delicacies."

He was able to entertain so lavishly in part because of a colossal black-market operation allegedly designed to procure consumer goods for blitz victims. Through the Four-Year Plan's senior economists Friedrich Gramsch and Kurt Kadgien he had already plundered the west's gold, foreign currency, and jewels. Now he set up an External Agency West (*Aussenstelle West*) to bulk-buy artifacts, wine, and foodstuffs—for his own use and disposition—throughout the occupied west. His senior purchasing agent here was Colonel J. Veltjens, a Richthofen Squadron veteran possessed of the right buccaneering spirit.

It is plain that Göring had a large stake in several business enterprises. He had a pecuniary interest in the near-worthless "vitamin pills" dispensed by the billion to the German armed forces by Hitler's doctor Theo Morell, because when the Luftwaffe's chief surgeon, Professor Erich Hippke, protested that the pills were useless, Morell complained in a letter to Göring dated July 31, and the Reichsmarschall sacked the professor without a hearing. Questioned whether he had a stake in Otto Horcher's famous, leather-walled gourmet restaurant in Berlin, he would deny it ("I am not that versatile!"), but the archives show that he had ordered Horcher's key staff to be exempted from the military draft, had tripled the gas allocation to Horcher vehicles, and had exempted the restaurant from Goebbels's "total war" decrees. Learning that Otto Horcher knew how to lay hands on seventy thousand bottles of port wine for the air force, Göring sanctioned the deal "provided that a small quantity is diverted for his personal use" and "ten thousand bottles are set aside for Horcher's."

After the fire raid on Lübeck Hitler reversed his decision about retaliation, and ordered Göring to carry out "terror attacks" on British cities other than London—like the ancient and beautiful towns of Bath and Exeter—until the British lost what he called their "appetite for terror." Göring complied. The British responded by setting fire to Rostock on the Baltic. Unhappy at this rising tide of barbarism, on April 19 the Reichsmarschall nonetheless lectured his Luftflotte commanders at Rominten about the need to show no quarter to the Soviets: "The Russian," he said, "is an enemy of barbarous methods. They ought not to be initiated by us, but we've got to show a sterner face." As the war slithered down its toboggan route of terror and counter-terror, Göring for the most part took refuge from taking responsibility for atrocities in the excuse of "superior orders."

In Paris it was spring. On May 14, the Reichsmarschall once more climbed aboard *Asia* with assorted Görings and Sonnemanns and headed back to France. But each visit now left him angrier than the last. "The people there

are eating off the fat of the land," he would grumble, speaking to gauleiters three months later. "It's a disgrace. I've seen villages where armies of them parade around with their long baguette loaves under their arms . . . and with baskets of oranges and fresh dates from North Africa." Dining at Maxim's in Paris the Reichsmarschall found himself surrounded by bloated French tricksters and wealthy black marketeers. "They're richer than ever," he fumed in the same speech, "because they charge us lunatic prices."

Train journeys like these brought home to him the gradual collapse of the wartime railroad system. French express trains still ran daily between Brussels and Paris, but the German railroads did not unload freight on Sundays or at night; fully laden trains choked the eastbound lines as Hitler's armies wound up for his spring offensive into Russia, and there were 165,000 empty freight cars waiting to return. The immense distances now covered effectively halved the available rolling stock. The result was a gradual breakdown of the railroad system that was starving the arms industry of coal and steel.

Reluctant to harm Reich Transport Minister Julius Dorpmüller—a personal friend and benefactor—Göring persuaded Hitler that the minister's sixty-five-year-old Staatssekretär, Wilhelm Kleinmann, was to blame for the railway chaos. Acting on Göring's advice, on May 24 Hitler told Speer and Milch to take charge of the transport system. Addressing these two men, he significantly reaffirmed his own esteem for Göring—"That's why I have appointed my best man," said Hitler, "who is somewhat younger than myself, as my successor."

Göring needed this kind of reassurance. He suspected that the Führer had begun to go behind his back. Hitler had spent several hours eating alone with Göring's subordinate, General von Richthofen, on May 21, discussing the Crimean campaign. He had even scoffed at the hunting fraternity. "I wonder why," mocked Hitler, "our soldiers don't hang up the jawbones of dead Russians in their rooms!" A few days later Richthofen dictated this smug note into his diary: "Göring has hawled-out Jeschonnek [chief of air staff] because I was with the Führer!"

Far worse was to come for Göring. Late on May 30, 1942, as he was entertaining Speer and Milch, the new "transport overlords," at Veldenstein Castle, the phone rang. It was the Nazi gauleiter of Cologne, Josef Grohé. A violent British air raid had begun, he screamed. After a further exchange during which Göring claimed that it could only be a small-scale attack the guests heard him bellow, "Are you calling me a liar?" and slam the phone down. The phone rang again, and Göring snatched it. This time he fell silent—and it was obvious who was calling now. Hitler, telephoning from his special train in East Prussia, told him the gauleiter was talking of "hundreds" of British bombers attacking. There had never been a British raid in such numbers before. But Göring assured him that the gauleiter's figures were wrong—seventy planes, at most, had attacked. As daybreak came, he learned, that his defenses had shot down forty bombers. It looked like a big victory,

even though five hundred people had died in the raid. But the wire services brought the sensational news that Churchill had solemnly announced in London that over one thousand bombers had taken part. White-faced, Göring bleated that this was just a lie. Jeschonnek nervously agreed, but Hitler refused to be deceived. "It is out of the question," he told his own staff, "that only seventy or eighty bombers attacked [Cologne]. I never capitulate to an unpleasant truth. I must see clearly if I am to draw the proper conclusions."

This first thousand-bomber raid marked a perceptible watershed in their relations. "The British have learned it all from us," the Reichsmarschall lamented months later. "That's the most depressing thing about it. Except for their electronic warfare they have learned it all from us—the how and the why of delivering concentrated air raids. They have cribbed the lot. They were botching things up so beautifully to start with!"

THE ROAD TO STALINGRAD

“**H**itler had told me,” Göring reminisced later, “that he proposed to consider the Russian war at an end when his armies were established on the Volga. Thereafter he would contain the Russians by occasional punitive expeditions while turning the bulk of his forces against the west.”

Early that summer of 1942 the Germans seemed on the point of realizing these aims, as Göring's pilots pounded the far-flung enemies of the Reich from Leningrad and Voronezh to Tobruk, as they bombed towns in southern England and freighters of Allied convoys in the Arctic bound for North Russia.

Göring's stock soared with the successes of the Luftwaffe, and he often ate with Hitler at the Wolf's Lair. A lunch guest that July 4 found the calmness that the Reichsmarschall radiated “impressive,” and remarked upon his “good-naturedness” and his “air of honest, unconditional loyalty.” When their table conversation turned to procuring vegetable oils from North Africa, Göring affably launched into a discourse on how he was stockpiling food by worldwide black-market operations—“often without letting his right hand know what his left hand was up to.”

This allusion to oil procurement was a first hint of problems to come. The

shortage of refined aviation spirit was already setting back Luftwaffe training and operations. Russian petroleum reserves, estimated at two thousand million tons, would provide the only long-term solution to Hitler's needs. According to the figures shown to Göring, the Baku Field—beyond the Caucasus Mountains—had reserves of 613 million tons, followed by Maykop with 137 million, and Groznyy with 120 million. But there was a snag: The retreating Russians had comprehensively sabotaged the wells, and the German invaders lacked the expertise and drilling equipment to restore production. They would need at least 120 rigs, and Göring now found that he had not set aside enough steel to make them.

On July 10, he called in the oil experts to discuss how to bring Maykop back into production once this field was captured. "Are we clear," he asked, "how we are going to tackle the demolitions? My own hope is that in the circumstances they will have had no time to carry out demolitions, because the wells are kept pumping until the last minute."

The experts dispelled his optimism. "I think," said one, "that once they've been prepared, demolitions are feasible in a very few hours."

At Kherson in the Ukraine the Germans were reassembling a refinery seized and dismantled in France. This would be able to produce four hundred thousand tons a year, but it would take until May 1943 to erect. "Does it have to take so long?" asked Göring.

"The Russians have wrecked everything," was the explanation. "So we have to rebuild from scratch."

"Getting oil wells working in winter," one expert lectured him, "is exceptionally tough."

"That's not the point," rasped Göring. "Even if it's tough, it's still got to be done."

As the armies hammered their way southward and southeastward into Russia, Göring reviewed his art collections yet again. The Dutch art dealer Hubert Menten offered him Adriaen Ysenbrant's "Madonna and Child"; Göring paid him thirty thousand Swiss francs for it. Deals in less valuable currencies ran less smoothly. After buying a series of Flemish tapestries depicting the life of the emperor Charlemagne for 4 million French francs from the Galerie Charpentier in Paris, Göring learned that the delighted vendors had only recently purchased them for one tenth of that price. The furious Reichsmarschall resorted to the usual offices of Dr. Helmuth Knochen, chief of the Paris Gestapo, but recovered only eight hundred thousand francs.

The most lurid example of his Byzantine purchasing methods came when he learned of two magnificent Flemish hunting tapestries in the Château de Bort, near Limoges. Owned jointly by the Marquis de Sèze and his estranged wife, each was thirty feet long and over fifteen feet high, woven over four hundred years before but with colors as fresh as yesterday. "If my uncle sees those," Lieutenant Göring had gasped, "they'll be packed up and taken

away!" Sure enough, in September 1942 Göring sent two French art agents, Messrs. Violet and Bourdaniat, to photograph them, ostensibly for an art catalog. The agents casually mentioned to the estranged Madame de Sèze the tempting sum of 20 million francs, but she said the tapestries were not for sale. Even under occupation law, Göring had to tread very carefully. Her husband agreed—if suitably bribed—to persuade her, provided Marshal Pétain himself would sign the export license. Madame de Sèze, however, fought back: She persuaded the French Administration des Beaux-Arts to list the tapestries as historic monuments. When the agents appeared at the château with Göring's cash, she announced triumphantly that she had given the tapestries to the nation. Göring instructed his General Hanesse to threaten Prime Minister Pierre Laval with massive retaliation, but Beaux-Arts now spirited the treasures away to Aubusson for "restoration," and the Laval government, refusing to be strong-armed, formally accepted the "gift" by decree of June 26—indignant, as Hanesse's adjutant Major Drees recorded that day, that Göring had larded 20 million francs around in bribes to French officials in addition to his original 20 million-franc offer. "In the absence of further instructions," reported Drees in a revealing message, "I shall refrain from making a song and dance with the French government, to avoid any of this coming to the ears of the German embassy here." Using top-secret Luftwaffe communication channels, Göring instructed him to tell Pétain that he was "incensed" by the tapestry affair and regarded the whole maneuver as a "swindle" by certain civil servants: "Surely the Government is able to refuse the gift and recognize the sale. I am just asking for my rights. In Germany something like this would be impossible: The state has enough authority to deal with such a case."

Laval capitulated. His chief of police seized the tapestries, and in August they would be shipped to Carinhall. Afrika Corps commander General von Thoma happened to witness their arrival, accompanied by an unidentified Luftwaffe major, probably Drees himself. "I've just flown in with the Junkers," Thoma heard the major announce. "And at last we've got those damned tapestries."

The gods of war did not stand aside while Göring indulged his muses. In June 1942 his defenses shot down their first British Mosquito bomber. Its fuselage was made of wood, which made it both fast and virtually invisible to radar. Göring angrily recalled that back in 1940 he too had ordered the manufacture of wooden planes (though "suggested" would probably be more accurate). Udet's staff had vetoed the production of "such garbage." Göring's investigators were unanimous, however, that he, Göring, could not escape the blame entirely—and he still preferred jaunts to Paris, Amsterdam, and Florence to listening to bad news at the ministry. "According to both the figures you supply and those we are getting from Britain," he jeered to Milch on June 29, "the British are making more bombers and more fighters

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than we are!" (The conference minutes add that he himself considered this "out of the question.") The truth was there, written in the skies, but he averted his gaze to more pleasurable horizons. His air force was overextended on every front, but he would not believe it. At the end of July the high command's General Walter Warlimont would return from North Africa with a bleak picture of Rommel's troops fighting against crushing enemy air superiority. "Do you hear that, Göring?" said Hitler, with an unpleasant edge to his voice. "Saturation bombing in the desert now!"

Hitler shifted his headquarters to Vinnitsa in the Ukraine in mid-July 1942. Göring settled at Kalinovka, about half an hour's drive away. The countryside was devastated and idle, there were airplane wrecks on the local airfield, and the surrounding peasantry were desperately poor. Göring made only one sortie into the conquered Ukrainian countryside, venturing forth into a local town. He sent a servant off with two cigar boxes to trade with the peasants, and a woman gave him a dozen fresh eggs for each of them. "The boxes were quite empty," laughed Göring delightedly later, "but they were pretty to look at. The woman was enthralled, she'd never had anything so beautiful in her life."

scene

It was not only Hitler's temper that Göring now had to allay. Public anger in the Reich was aroused by the continual air raids and food shortages. On August 5, the gauleiters stated their complaints to him in the lavishly furnished "Hermann Göring Room" of the Air Ministry. The next day Göring counterattacked, blaming the food shortages on the slackness of the gauleiters of the newly occupied territories. "Our troops," he complained, "have already occupied the incomparably fertile lands between the Don and the Caucasus . . . and yet the German people are still going hungry." In Western Europe the rich crops were being harvested, yet nothing had been delivered by Holland, Belgium, or France to Germany. "Gentlemen," he complained to the gauleiters, "these people all hate our guts and you won't win one of them over with your namby-pamby methods. They're charming to us right now because they've got no choice. But if the British once get in there, just watch the French show their true face! The same Frenchman who keeps inviting you to lunch now will very rapidly show you that the Frenchman is a German-hater." "I'm fed up to here," he said a few moments later, slicing his hand across his thick neck. "We win victory after victory. Where's the profit from these victories?"

He suggested one typically cynical way of procuring consumer-goods from the occupied territories. "We must first buy up all that pink junk and those frightful alabaster things and trashy jewelry in Venice—there's not a country on earth that can match Italy for kitsch. . . . The [Ukrainian] peasants won't part with anything for money, but they do barter. . . . For face powder you can get butter or anything you want. So let's buy up kitsch. Let's open kitsch factories!"

What was happening behind the eastern front now was no joking matter.

The summer offensive was no longer making such rapid progress, and the high Caucasus Mountains were looming ahead of Field Marshal Wilhelm List's army group. Months earlier, Göring had asked secretly for data on the Caucasus. His staff had supplied eight library books including Karl Egger's *Conquest of the Caucasus*, the journal of the Austrian Alpine Association, and a pocket guide to the U.S.S.R. He had read the books by June 25 and returned them, satisfied that he was now an expert on the Caucasus. When the army's chief of staff, Franz Halder, now reminded Hitler of this mountain barrier, Göring swept his bejeweled, sausagelike fingers across the map and declared, "The Caucasus? It's no different really from Berlin's Grünewald."

Out of the forests and marshes behind the advancing German armies there now rose hordes of Soviet partisans. Göring suggested releasing convicted poachers and smugglers into special units of desperadoes to combat partisans with their own irregular methods—they could "burn and ravish," as he put it, in their assigned operational zones. To this suggestion he then added the idea of conscripting Dutchmen willy-nilly into two antipartisan regiments. When a police general at his conference on August 6 remarked that previous attempts at recruiting the Dutch had failed, Göring rounded on him angrily. "Then shanghai them! Dump them in the partisan territories, and don't give them any guns until they get there! 'Root, hog—or die!'" Gauleiter Lohse stated that the partisans were appearing in military formations equipped with better weapons than the police units.

GÖRING: You'd make a great fiction writer, Mr. Lohse—

LOHSE: They're reports from the police and Wehrmacht!

GÖRING:—If they're from our Wehrmacht then I'd say, *best-selling* fiction. . . . If ten partisans turn up with muskets, then the Wehrmacht afterward talks about whole divisions of them!

In the far south General von Richthofen decided that Stalin's armies were beaten, and dictated this observation into his diary. Beppo Schmid, Göring's Chief Intelligence officer, assessed the Soviet air strength at less than one thousand planes. But Theo Rowehl's reconnaissance squadron brought back photographs of thousands of planes concealed on airfields up to six hundred miles behind the enemy lines. Schmid decided that the planes were dummies; he decided too that on balance it would be prudent to withhold the more awkward photographs from the air staff. Jeschonnek was worried enough about the future. Schmid overheard him telling his staff, "If we haven't won by December, then there's no chance."

As General von Hoth's Fourth Panzer Army slowed to a virtual standstill outside Stalingrad that August, Göring's criticisms of the army generals became more trenchant. Armed by Richthofen with specific details, he accused the generals of cowardice and of exaggerating the Soviet strength. On August 27, Richthofen's operations officer, Colonel Karl-Heinz Schulz,

came to report on the defeatism and feeble leadership of the Sixth Army's commander, Friedrich Paulus, and his corps commanders. Göring passed these complaints on to Hitler. There could be no talk of "strong enemy forces," he insisted—"Reconnoitering northward," he continued, "my air force had its work cut out to find any enemy troops at all, in wide-open terrain."

Hitler was in no mood to listen to the army's defense against Göring's allegations. The sweltering, mosquito-laden climate of Vinnitsa contributed to the ill temper. Oppressed by fear that the British bomber squadrons would soon start to devastate Munich, Vienna, Linz, and Nuremberg, he instructed Göring to start building flak towers in those cities at once. Göring told his staff of Hitler's gloomy prognosis on September 1, and added a prediction of his own: "We'll probably get these [raids] once our troops are standing south of the Caucasus." But that triumphant moment suddenly seemed more distant than ever; Field Marshal List arrived at Hitler's headquarters with maps showing that he could make no further progress through the tortuous, narrow mountain passes. Feeling cheated and betrayed, Hitler flew into a tantrum, refused to shake hands with one general and erupted like a volcano over another. Göring fled from the headquarters before the glowing lava engulfed him too. Milch, who arrived at midday, noted afterward: "Row over List, Göring already left." The Reichsmarschall sent off for twenty more books on the Caucasus.

But the real fulcrum of the fighting now became Stalingrad, not the Caucasus. The city was a grimy, sprawling sea of houses and factories straddling the Volga River. Each side realized that Stalingrad was the key to the Russian campaign. On September 10, Richthofen wrote, exasperated, "The throttling of Stalingrad gets slower and slower." From his base headquarters at a fighter airfield only ten miles from the city he phoned Göring on the thirteenth to demand that one single army commander take over that sector—and he did not mean Paulus, whom he regarded as "worthy but uninspiring."

The Americans had now begun raiding German targets with their famous B-17 Flying Fortress squadrons. The bomber flew fast and high. It was heavily armored and equipped with eleven heavy machine guns. A gloomy overcast settled on Göring's fighter commanders.

Göring concealed the bad news from the German public. "If Mr. Churchill brags," he thundered to a Berlin audience on October 4, "that he is going to have thousand-bomber jaunts over Germany every night, let me just reply this: He won't be making any at all." He dismissed the American bomber threat equally cheerily. "In the American language," he scoffed, "one word is spelled in capital letters: Bluff!"

But one of the formidable B-17's had now been shot down—it had drifted out of formation—and when Milch came out to see Göring at Kalinovka a week after the speech, he brought the dossier on it. The field marshal solemnly warned against underestimating this plane.

"How come they tell me one thing," Göring challenged, uneasily alluding to the air staff, "and you another? Whom do I believe?"

His experts had now spotted what looked like turbochargers on photographs of an American B-24 Liberator bomber. That meant that they might soon be flying into German airspace at thirty thousand feet. Göring shrugged it off. "The Reichsmarschall," Milch reported to his staff in Berlin a few days later, "told me that there is no cause for anxiety about the American planes and that four-engined though they be, we can can contemplate the future with equanimity. I told him that I do not agree—I think the Flying Fortress and B-24 are remarkable planes."

Facing allegations of the hoarding of labor in his bloated Luftwaffe, in September 1942 Göring was ordered by Hitler to release two hundred thousand of his troops to the depleted army. It was a bitter blow. He offered to set up twenty Luftwaffe ~~field divisions~~ instead, and Hitler relented.

It was a controversial decision, even in the air force. General von Richtofen feared (rightly, as it turned out) that the Luftwaffe divisions would prove "a colossal blunder," and noted this belief in his diary after flying over to see the Reichsmarschall on October 15, bringing photographs of the ravages of Stalingrad:

[Göring] curses List, Kleist, and Ruoff [the army's commanders in the Caucasus] dreadfully. I stoutly defend the latter two, but there's no reasoning with the Reichsmarschall. Drags me off with Jeschonnek to make an unannounced call on the Führer and lets fly there [against the army generals].

Helmuth Greiner, the high command chronicler, wrote in his own private diary that day, "The witch hunt by the air-force brass against the army goes on. Ghastly ass-licking." Back aboard the train *Asia* Richthofen tried to curry favor with Göring over dinner. "I praise his really very good [Berlin] speech. He swallows the flattery hook, line, and sinker. Hints at an early field marshal's baton for me. . . . I protest at having to lug a baton around."

As the exhausted German infantry slogged into Stalingrad and the rumors of a huge Red Army counteroffensive multiplied, Göring left for a week in Rome. The German diplomats there did not relish his coming, and the chortling German ambassador phoned the Palazzo Venezia on October 19 that Göring had been suddenly stricken with dysentery, and was "unable to leave his throne even for ten minutes." When Göring finally limped in to the palace four days later, Mussolini harped on Rommel's oil crisis and the troublesome British base on Malta. Four days after their meeting, the British launched their triumphant offensive against Rommel at Alamein. On November 2, British code-breakers heard Göring's headquarters frantically diverting bomber squadrons from Norway to the Mediterranean. Richthofen's Luftflotte 4—

scene

already pushed to its limits by the Stalingrad fighting—was ordered to detach night fighters to Greece.

Disobeying Hitler's orders ("Victory or death!"), Rommel pulled his armies back to a line that he had secretly prepared at Fuka. Göring, sensing another army debacle, ordered Field Marshal Kesselring to fly to Africa. Kesselring, who was the high command's commander in chief south, returned to Rome late on November 5 and phoned the Reichsmarschall.*

GÖRING: What is the situation?

KESSELRING: It is such that the Führer will approve all the measures we have proposed. Down here a situation developed that flatly contradicted the orders of the Führer. The line that is now crucial is the one at Fuka.

GÖRING: Is it well organized?

KESSELRING: No, but it does offer considerable advantages, so I feel that if it is manned by the necessary forces, it will afford at least temporarily a viable resistance.

Worse was to follow. The Germans sighted an Allied invasion convoy approaching through the Straits of Gibraltar. Göring directed Kesselring that evening to order heroic sacrifices to halt the convoy.

GÖRING: According to our calculations the convoy will be within our air-force range in forty or fifty hours. Everything must be ready by then.

KESSELRING: Herr Reichsmarschall, what if the convoy should attempt a landing in Africa?

GÖRING: I am convinced that it will try to land in Corsica, in Sardinia, or at Derna or Tripoli.

KESSELRING: More likely one of the ports of North Africa.

GÖRING: Yes but not French North Africa. . . . If the convoy could be given a severe thrashing, the countries in Africa will get a very different picture of the situation and this would reduce the effect of the defeat [at Alamein]. Therefore the Führer has asked me to tell you that this convoy battle is first and foremost. If the convoy should be beaten, decimated, destroyed, dispersed, then [Rommel's] defeat will have no more importance than a tactical breakthrough—which in fact it is for the time being.

Tomorrow you are to deliver an appeal to your troops stating that their actions, their capacity for sacrifice, their courage, their stamina will redound to the glory of the German Air Force. Tell them that I expect every German airman to do his utmost, even

*Italian intelligence wiretapped this and the subsequent conversation with Göring.

the supreme sacrifice. The convoy is to be attacked without pause, day and night, wave after wave.

When the airmen load their bombs, tell them their job is to attack the aircraft carriers so that the planes can't land or take off. Next, hit the troop transports: matériel without men is worthless.

No other operations are to take place beside those against this convoy. It is the most important convoy. It is Number One. You are to direct the operations against it in person.

KESSELRING: Yes, sir.

GÖRING: I wish you all the best and am with you constantly in my thoughts.

British code-breakers heard Kesselring issue the order precisely as Göring had specified, but nothing could halt the great Allied invasion (Operation *Torch*). On November 8, the British and American forces landed in French North Africa (precisely where Göring had not expected them). Reacting swiftly, Hitler ordered a new bridgehead established in Tunis. Meeting their Italian allies in Munich the next day, Göring silently accompanied Hitler to the Führer Building, then told Count Ciano candidly that this invasion of North Africa was the first real point the Allies had scored in this war.

scene

With the final collapse of List's Caucasus offensive the Stalingrad catastrophe began. Hitler was faced with doleful decisions. On October 29, British code-breakers had already heard Göring instructing Richthofen's Luftflotte 4 to destroy the coveted oil installations at Grozny. A week later he ordered Baku bombed as well.

As the focus of military events shifted back to Stalingrad, the Nazi leaders were widely dispersed. Hitler was in Bavaria, the air-force and army staffs were in East Prussia, and Göring in Berlin. The Reichsmarschall was fulfilling mundane duties there—appointing professors in his capacity as prime minister of Prussia, recruiting experts to the new Reich Research Council, supervising guided-missile developments, and selecting Nazi “commissioners” (*Beauftragte*) for high-frequency physics and nuclear-physics research. And he refused to accept that the Four-Year Plan was dead. “For the sake of historical truth,” he admonished Albert Speer in a letter on November 5, “I should like to make it absolutely plain that I have not relaxed my grip on the essentials of the Four-Year Plan for one instant. A glance at the dates of the conferences and sessions, at their minutes, at the decrees, laws, and ordinances that I have issued throughout this war, should satisfy you immediately that I continue to shape the crucial affairs of the Four-Year Plan despite my preoccupation with the air force.”

He was still in Berlin two weeks later as the Red Army counteroffensive at Stalingrad began, across the River Don. On the next day, November 20, the Russians established a second breach in the German lines. Göring, tel-

ephoned about these developments by Hitler, was not especially concerned. Nothing shows that he realized that an immense Soviet pincer movement was beginning, and about to encircle the Sixth Army in Stalingrad, trapping twenty German divisions, two Romanian, and the air force's own 9th Flak Division. He remained at Carinhall. It was in Göring's absence, therefore, that the young chief of air staff Hans Jeschonnek, who had arrived that day in Berchtesgaden bringing a skeleton air staff from East Prussia, made the fateful offer to Hitler: Jeschonnek assured Hitler that the Luftwaffe could airlift enough supplies into Stalingrad, using transport planes and bombers, even if the Sixth Army was encircled there.

At 3:25 P.M. on November 21, Hitler thus signaled to that army's commander, General Paulus, ordering him to stand firm "despite the danger of temporary encirclement." Paulus was to hold open the rail link as long as possible; an airlift would follow. Hitler told Colonel Eckhard Christian to get Göring on the line, then took the instrument from him. Still in Berlin, the Reichsmarschall agreed that the air force would do what it could.

The Stalingrad airlift—or rather, its failure—would ever after be linked with Göring's name. Yet for once he was not entirely culpable. Exonerating him three months later, Hitler would admit to Richthofen that he had promised the airlift to Paulus "without the Reichsmarschall's knowledge."

*Hitler likes
the possibilities.
Let the
Russians
consume
themselves
attacking the
encircled*

At the time of Hitler's phone call, the afternoon of November 21, Göring was presiding over an oil conference in Berlin. German troops had occupied the Maykop oil field that summer, only to find that the Russians had shut in the wells and dropped unremovable hundred-pound steel "mushrooms" down each borehole. Göring was frustrated to find his men so tantalizingly near to the vast oil reserves. "I'm fed up!" he exclaimed. "Months have passed since we captured the first oil wells, yet we still aren't getting any benefit." The steel mushrooms baffled him. "Can't you just drill them out with something like a gigantic corkscrew?"

The experts shook their heads. The Russians had, moreover, unhelpfully left behind faked "oil-field charts." Göring blamed the delays on the high command, who had been running the operation without any reference to him. "Before we even went into Russia," he raged, "it was made quite clear that the entire economic setup would come under me, right up to the front-line troops. I didn't just have that odd eastern organization, what's its name, at my service." ("Wirtschaftsstab Ost," murmured Körner helpfully.) "It is scandalous of this Mr. Thomas," the Reichsmarschall ranted on, referring to Georg Thomas of the high command. "He knew full well that the Führer had signed this. . . . Now I am beginning to see it all more clearly. . . . Let me make myself clear. If the Russians can manage, then so can we. Otherwise, we shall have to resort to Russian methods too."

His experts hastened to soothe him. "Herr Reichsmarschall," pleaded one, "we'll manage somehow, bank on it."

"If there's no oil flowing by next spring and we have to send oil down to our armored divisions, then God help the lot of you. Because let me say this, I am *plein*—up to my back teeth!"

The high command had put a General Homburg in charge of the Petroleum Brigade. Göring challenged the experts: "That's what this general is there for. He must push the button. He's got to tell the army commanders, Do you want the oil next year or don't you!"

"But he can't do it if he's sitting two hundred miles away from Maykop," pointed out another expert.

Göring seized on that. "Where!?"

"At Pyatigorsk, two hundred miles from Maykop."

Göring of course had his desk considerably farther from the oil fields than that. But he knew what it meant if they failed to find oil soon: He would need scapegoats.

That day he ordered all his phone conversations logged in a register, showing the location and time of each call.

If the record book had survived, it would have answered several outstanding questions about the worsening Stalingrad crisis. By now Richthofen was cautioning everybody who would listen that the Luftwaffe lacked the lift to sustain the Sixth Army. He phoned Göring in Berlin, he signaled to General Karl Zeitzler, Halder's successor, in East Prussia, he warned the army group commander, Maximilian von Weichs, on the Don front. Ex-Lufthansa chief Field Marshal Milch, however, was evidently among those who assured Göring that the airlift was practicable. As the Reichsmarschall's white-jacketed dining-car attendants served dinner off silver salvers in Asia that night, Göring summoned his quartermaster staff and ordered every available transport plane mobilized for the airlift, including his own courier flight.

Later that night his train set off for Bavaria.

Trusting in Hermann Göring, his "faithful Paladin," at midnight Hitler again signaled to Paulus in Stalingrad, ordering him to stand fast.

Nineteen hours later the Sixth Army commander replied: His army, he announced, was now cut off by the Russians; his food and ammunition were already low; and he had fuel for six days.

Asia reached Berchtesgaden at about the same time as this signal, late on November 22, 1942. The train was hauling its now-familiar rolling stock, including flat tops laden with cars—the Reichsmarschall's personal armored Mercedes, an armored coupé, a 5.4-liter Mercedes, a 3.4-liter Mercedes, a Ford Mercury, a 1.7-liter Mercedes, and assorted baggage trucks and motorbikes. Surrounded by a sizable retinue that included valet Robert, nurse Christa, and heart-specialist Professor Heinrich Zahler, Göring was impatient to continue the journey that night: He had several long-standing appointments with art dealers in Paris that he did not want to miss.

Visiting Hitler on the mist-shrouded Obersalzberg, he barely discussed either Stalingrad or the 250,000 men trapped there. "Hitler," he explained

guiltily to Pili Körner a few days later, "already had [Jeschonnek's airlift] plan before I set eyes on it. I could only say, Mein Führer, you have the figures. If these figures are right, then I am at your disposal."

But the figures were not right at all. Jeschonnek only now realized that the standard "250-kilo" airlift container on which he had based them in fact held far less than that load—its name derived solely from the 250-kilo bomb position it occupied on the bomb racks. Göring winced when the general confessed this to him, but forbade him to tell Hitler. "I cannot do this to the Führer—not now!" he said. Telephoning Hitler himself, he repeated that the Luftwaffe airlift would go ahead, and he invited him to phone Milch if he still harbored any doubts.

Scene

For Hitler the fatal decision was the product of political pride. He had committed himself publicly to capturing the city, and he could not go back on that pledge. Later, Göring mentioned operational factors that influenced him. There was, he said, no reason to believe that the army's main front line would fall back as far and as fast as it did, and it was the increasing distances that ultimately thwarted the airlift.

Down in the Berchtesgaden valley that night, November 22–23, 1942, Göring's train *Asia* slid off toward Paris.

At 10:00 P.M. Hitler's train also departed, in the other direction—returning to East Prussia. He would arrive at the Wolf's Lair twenty-four hours later. At 5:40 A.M. on November 24 he sent yet another grim signal to the embattled General Paulus at Stalingrad: The Sixth Army, this stated, was to stand fast. "Airlift operation by one hundred more Junkers is starting up."

FALL FROM GRACE

A quarter of a million of Hitler's troops were encircled in Stalingrad; they would become Stalin's hostages, and very few would ever be seen alive again. Göring would soon suspect that, given the simultaneous failure to prevent the Allied landings in northwest Africa, only a deal with Stalin would offer Nazi Germany any chance of survival. But, as he admitted to interrogators three years later, whenever he tried to speak frankly to Hitler, his heart sank to the seat of his pants.

At first he did not realize the scale of the Stalingrad tragedy, but that did not make his personal movements any less scandalous or unforgivable.

He arrived in Paris on November 23, 1942, and on the next day—even as Field Marshal von Manstein was signaling to Paulus, "We shall hack you free!"—Göring continued his Paris spree with a visit to the Jeu de Paume. It was to be his last visit to this treasure-house. He was in an ill humor, which he worked off by abusing Hanesse loudly as they toured the little gallery. Archival documents dated that day number among them valuations by Göring's tame assessor, Professor Beltrand, on fifty-eight items, including Van Goghs, a Corot, and (at ten thousand francs) Utrillo's "Suburban Street,"

scandal

which latter the Reichsmarschall proposed to exchange for Jodocus de Momper's "The Rock Chapel." Further documents surviving from this jaunt included a bill of lading typed by the Rosenberg task force and headed: "The following items were loaded aboard the Reichsmarschall's special train today"—listing seventy-seven crates of confiscated, bartered, or privately purchased paintings, tapestries, floor- and wall-coverings, and other bric-à-brac, including a carved oak-and-pewter washstand, seven fragments of an ancient sarcophagus, bronze and marble statuary, and silver plate. A further Rosenberg list dated this same November 24, 1942, described thirteen priceless carpets and silk rugs that he had bought. Among the other items loaded aboard *Asia* on the twenty-fifth were five Scipio tapestries, purchased for 2.8 million francs, a Salomon Koninck portrait of an old man in a red beret, and a Cranach for which he had forked out fifty thousand Swiss francs. Stalingrad, it seems, had been forgotten.

The Utrillo purchase illuminated the unsavory demimonde into which his passion for art dealings had propelled him. Seeking high protectors, the Paris dealer Allan Löbl, an Austro-Hungarian Jew, offered Göring the priceless art library of the Kleinberger Gallery as a gift. Not wanting to obligate himself to a Jew by accepting a gift, Göring instructed Bruno Lohse to give Löbl the Utrillo in exchange. Suspecting that his charmed existence might not last forever, Löbl then suggested that he and his brother Manon Löbl should act as stool pigeons for Göring in Paris. On June 15, 1943, Lohse would suggest to the Reichsmarschall that he formally request the Gestapo to continue to make "the Jewish brothers Löbl" available as informers. Göring approved, but Fräulein Limberger noted the caveat he uttered thus: "Lohse must see he doesn't do it in any way that might link the Reichsmarschall's name with Jews! If possible, do it clandestinely."

scenes

By late November 24, 1942, it would have become plain to Göring, were he not in Paris, that his air force had bitten off more than it could chew at Stalingrad. In theory, five or six transport squadrons could airlift five hundred tons of supplies a day. But given the worsening weather conditions, the lift would in practice call for 12 to 15 squadrons, or between 630 and 795 Junkers 52 transport planes. Göring had lost hundreds of them at Crete. They had only 750 Ju 52's left, and Hitler had recently committed most of these to the supply of Rommel's armies in Africa. Richthofen had predicted this all along, but what could he now do to discourage the airlift? "I urge Jeschonnek and Zeitzler to tell the Führer my view, and to harness the Reichsmarschall," he dictated to his diary on November 25, "but he's in Paris."*

*This diary entry, and the Rosenberg documents cited above, render most suspect the General Gerhard Engel "diary" published by Professor Martin Broszat's Institute of Contemporary History in Munich, which has Engel "witnessing" a row between Hitler and Göring at East Prussia this same day!

By the time Göring arrived back in East Prussia, the Stalingrad situation was beyond repair. Tempers flared. "Manstein," recorded Richthofen on November 27, "[is] desperate about the decisions taken at top level."

Incredibly, Hitler's staff were less concerned with Stalingrad than with North Africa. At 3:20 P.M. on November 28—to everybody's astonishment—Field Marshal Rommel appeared in person at Hitler's headquarters and demanded his permission to abandon Libya altogether, pulling back to a new line at Gabès in Tunisia, where he proposed to fight a completely new campaign. Icily contemptuous, Hitler asked Rommel which front he did propose to hold. If North Africa were lost, he pointed out, Italy would probably defect. Writing in his own diary that night, Rommel dictated, "Five P.M., conference with Führer in presence of Reichsmarschall. Talked until eight. Führer is flatly against giving up the African theater. . . . The Italians must be put under pressure to make a really serious effort to ferry supplies to Africa."

Hitler packed Göring and Rommel off by train to Rome that same night, with orders to tackle Mussolini. The Reichsmarschall grudgingly packed his bags, hoisted himself aboard *Asia* and set off with the desert commander for Italy. Rommel's wife, Lucie, who joined the train at Munich, would recall later with distaste that Göring chatted only about his art acquisitions and his gems throughout the journey. But Rommel humored him, and used the two-day train journey to work on him: By early on the thirtieth, as their train puffed into the Italian capital, Rommel was recording that Göring now fully endorsed his Gabès plan. Exuding optimism, Göring ordered twenty of the powerful new eighty-eight-millimeter flak guns rushed to Rommel's forces, and he phoned Milch to come down immediately to Rome to step up Italian aircraft production.

Then, however, he received Field Marshal Kesselring. Kesselring pointed out that retreating to Gabès would bring the enemy air force within close range of the Axis bridgehead harbors in Tunisia. Accepting the logic of this, Göring now declared that Rommel must on no account abandon Tripoli.

He was driven across Rome to see Mussolini that evening. In a three-hour wrangle with him, the thin and pale-skinned Duce made plain that he too had favored the Gabès plan; but he could not ignore Kesselring's arguments.

Hearing this, Rommel plunged into a depression. At a joint session the next morning, December 1, he heard Göring repeat that Tripoli must be held. The Reichsmarschall's optimism now bordered on the insufferable. For once, he braggd, the Axis had the edge. "For the first time we are not far removed from the field of battle. A mere panther's spring! Therefore, we have every chance of rushing troops and matériel into Tunisia." He promised to pack four first-class divisions into the new Tunis bridgehead—the 10th Panzer and those bearing the names of Hitler, Göring, and Deutschland. "We must try to push the enemy back toward Oran, and then head for Morocco," he said.

*maneuver his
acquisitions
at a low speed
about his
deal with
Persian
and Jewish
intermediaries
normal*

He proposed laying two immense minefields across the narrow Straits of Sicily, with a safe channel to sluice their transport ships through to North Africa. Germany would supply the necessary mines. "I realize that this is a vast undertaking," he conceded, "but we should think along such lines." Answering the angry comments of the Italian Fleet commander, Admiral Raffaelo Riccardi, and German Admiral Eberhard Weichold, the Reichsmarschall jeered, "The navy's prejudices and opinions are out of date."

He cabled Hitler afterward, reporting that the Italians agreed that Rommel's next line should be at Buerat and speaking of Rommel's loss of nerve. He handled the field marshal so tactlessly over lunch that Milch, arriving from Berlin as it ended, found Rommel upstairs weeping with rage at Göring.

After that Göring traveled in arrogant luxury aboard *Asia* down to Naples, where he talked with the dockhands and inspected port defenses. Disregarding Rome completely, he ordered the youthful local Fascist chieftain to take charge of the transport ships to Africa. "Göring," wrote the indignant Ciano on the fifth, "continues to preside over meetings to which he invites civilians, [Guido] Buffarini [Fascist minister of the interior], technical ministers, and so forth. . . . Yesterday, when Göring arrived at the supreme command's headquarters, he was received in the courtyard by our military chiefs!" Ciano put it around that Göring evidently saw himself as a future *Reichsprotektor of Italy*.

On December 11, 1942, the Reichsmarschall reported back at the Führer's headquarters. "[Göring] says." Hitler reported to his staff the next day, "that Rommel has completely lost his nerve."

In private Göring told Hitler that Mussolini was advising them to call off their now-pointless war against Russia. A few days later the despondent Italian foreign minister Ciano and Marshal Ugo Cavallero, chief of the supreme command, came to East Prussia to repeat this advice. Göring and Ribbentrop nodded approval, but Hitler responded with an encouraging catalog of his victories since 1938. The matter was not mentioned again.

a speech

His airlift to Stalingrad struggled lamely on. A typical day was December 19: His planes flew only seventy tons into the "fortress." Göring scoffed during Hitler's main war conference that day that the food situation probably was not as bad as General Paulus made out. From the front line a thousand miles away Field Marshal von Manstein sarcastically suggested that the Reichsmarschall himself take over. "Let the 'confident' commander," he declared, "take charge of the sector that he's so confident about!"

On the thirtieth, Richthofen telephoned Carinhall. The distant Reichsmarschall replied with what Richthofen referred to only as "words of fire." "I would have preferred more forces," observed the Luftflotte commander.

* * *

Göring's own diary opened in 1943 to reveal him still at Carinhall, seeing the New Year in. He made only occasional forays into Berlin. He proudly watched little Edda at ballet school, listened to Rosita Serrano sing, went for drives in the snow, hunted wild boar; he canceled a conference with Galland and Dietrich Pelz, his bomber commander, and in general refused to see what was bearing down on Germany's skies. On January 4, Milch and his technical chief Colonel Wolfgang Vorwald brought out to Carinhall the red top-secret volume of enemy production statistics: Britain, the United States, and Canada, this showed, had been producing 1,378 bombers and 1,959 fighters per month during 1942, while German industry had averaged only 349 and 247 respectively. "Milch," thundered the Reichsmarschall, comfortably seated behind his great desk, "have you joined the dreamers too? Do you really believe all this?"

The next day Milch confessed to his staff, "The Reichsmarschall doesn't quite see eye to eye with me on these figures."

"Even if they *are* making these numbers," he quoted Göring as saying, "they're no use whatever to their forces in Africa if they can't back them up with the necessary shipping space."

In a few days' time Göring would complete his half-century. Late on January 6, 1943, he left for East Prussia, spent seven hours the next day with Hitler, jotted into his diary a jumble of notes on discussions with Speer, Rosenberg, Bormann, and Milch; then waddled back to Carinhall. The preparations for his fiftieth birthday helped to deaden the ever-fainter cries coming from Stalingrad, and the hollering from North Africa. He had one talk with Kesselring about "the case of Rommel," but his birthday overshadowed all else. Pandering to his eager mood, the Italians awarded him the first Gold Star of the Roman Eagle at their embassy. The Berlin theaters were closed, but he ordered one reopened and bused his staff in from Carinhall to hear music by Handel and an aria from a Glück opera ("O that I were never born"), followed by scenes from *A Midsummer Night's Dream* and a play by Kleist. Two of the actors had Jewish wives, but Göring had extended to them his personal protection.

The birthday gifts might seem to have borne witness to the enduring strength of his political position in Germany. Mussolini had sent a golden sword originally destined for General Franco. (As Ciano observed, "Times have changed.") Ciano himself gave him the Star of San Maurizio (once earmarked for King Zog of Albania, but also reassigned.) Three leading German businessmen gave a twenty-four-hundred piece Sèvres porcelain service of a hunting design. Kurt Schmitt, the Allianz Insurance Company's chief, had swiftly complied when Gritzbach of Göring's staff phoned to suggest giving three medieval statues at seventeen thousand marks apiece. Paul Pleiger had given one million marks (one hundred thousand from H.G.W., the rest from a political fund controlled by the Reich coal owners' lobby).

Hitler had sent a personal handwritten letter dated January 11, 1943; it was among Göring's most prized papers in 1945, but was looted and is now lost, as is the solid-gold jewel-encrusted cassette handcrafted by Hitler's favorite designer, Gerdi Troost, and handed by Keitel to Göring to house his white parchment authority as Reichsmarschall.

Hitler had ordered public celebration, but Göring saw through the phony acclamations and later described this birthday as the final watershed in his fortunes. Overwhelmed by depression, he retired to bed, entering in his diary on the thirteenth the words "ill" and "bed rest because of heart palpitations," and on the fourteenth, again, "Bed rest all day, ill! (Heart)." Professor Zahler was sent for.*

In part the heart problems were a consequence of his massive obesity; in part the malaise was probably psychological. He could see his authority being openly dismantled. On January 13, Hitler created a "Commission of Three" (*Dreierausschuss*) to control manpower. Göring was excluded. On the fourteenth, bypassing Göring, Hitler sent for Staatssekretär Milch and instructed him to take over—even at this eleventh hour—the vital Stalingrad airlift.

On the night of January 16–17, the RAF attacked Berlin using new "blockbuster" bombs. After inspecting the damage, Göring lunched at Hitler's headquarters on the eighteenth. Hitler showed him the latest hysterical signals from Paulus about the airlift. Göring phoned them through to Milch, now at the front line. "The most frightful signals are coming from the fortress," Göring complained.

In fact Göring had provided the planes he promised, but the squadron commanders were letting him down. They had done nothing to keep the waiting air crews warm, the crews themselves were ignorant of standard cold-start procedures, and morale was rock-bottom. Of 140 Junkers 52 transports, only 15 were operational on the day Milch arrived; of 140 Heinkel 111's only 41, of 20 FW 200's only 1. Of these planes only seven Junkers and eleven Heinkels were actually scheduled to make the round trip that day. Milch at once sacked the incompetent generals, organized new landing grounds, parachuted radio beacons and flare-path equipment into the fortress. But as the weeks passed, the airfields in Stalingrad were lost, and the front line retreated so far that the Heinkels could no longer make the return flight.

Hitler ordered Milch to fly the highly esteemed Panzer general Hans Hube out of the fortress. "Why not kill an air-force general or two!" Hube told him, pointing out that there was not one Luftwaffe general now left inside Stalingrad. Hitler passed the scathing remark on to Göring. "Isn't it remarkable," sneered Göring to Milch, "how anybody who goes to the front immediately loses his clear view of the front!" Richthofen, listening on the

*Göring was now taking Cardiazol, Pentamethylene-Tetrazol, manufactured by Knoll of Ludwigshafen, a heart stimulant of relatively short-lived effect. Back in November 1941 Göring's staff had ordered from Siemens a portable electrocardiograph for Professor Zahler, and Görnert had endorsed the order as "very urgent."

other earpiece, looked around for "a wall to run up," as he admitted in his diary. When Göring, calming down, phoned again on the twentieth, Milch said that both he and Manstein regarded the Sixth Army's plight as hopeless.

Impotent to help the Sixth Army, Göring now haunted Hitler's headquarters. Milch wrote in his diary on January 23, "Telephoned Führer's headquarters until 2:00 or 3:00 A.M. Göring sends endless telegrams." Displaying a frenzy born of belated guilt, Göring spent five hours with Hitler that day, phoned him twice on the twenty-fifth (about a new crisis developing at Voronezh), and personally attended Hitler's main conferences on the twenty-sixth and twenty-seventh.

Milch now had trainloads of transport gliders, ground crew, preheating equipment, and mass-produced airlift containers bearing down on the Stalingrad front; a squadron of the new Me 109G fighter planes was also on its way. But the Army Department rang with vicious criticism of the Luftwaffe. The army spokesman General Kurt Dittmar described in his diary the sense of bitterness at what they saw as Göring's "unfulfilled promises" of an airlift, and Hitler made no secret of his disgust at the fiasco of the vaunted He 177 long-range bomber in the airlift.

On January 27, 1943, unescorted American B-17 bombers delivered their first daring daylight raid on German territory, attacking Wilhelmshaven Naval Base. A more direct affront to Göring's pride followed on the thirtieth. It was the tenth anniversary of the Nazi "seizure of power." Göring was due to broadcast at 11:00 A.M. over every German radio station; but with sublime indifference to his feelings the RAF sent Mosquito bombers scudding right across Germany to Berlin, to drive him underground at that precise hour.

Hitler had directed him on the nineteenth to tend specifically to the air defenses of Leipzig, Dresden, Weimar, and Kassel. On the twentieth Göring had told the night-fighter commander, General Hans Kammhuber, to extend their night defenses to the north of Berlin and into southern Germany, he had ordered every fighter-squadron commander to come to Carinhall at the end of the month. (The British code-breakers intercepted this signal.) Colonel Adolf Galland was among the commanders who lunched and conferred with the worried Reichsmarschall now, discussing ways of defeating this two-fisted Allied bomber menace. Galland described his plans to strengthen the day-fighter forces; his deputy, Colonel Lützow, spoke about the expanding radar-tracking network. For the first time Galland referred to the Reich's coming jet planes like the Me 262 and the Me 163 rocket-powered interceptor. Worse was to come: Luftwaffe experts discovered revolutionary new electronic equipment in an RAF bomber shot down that very night, January 30-31, near Rotterdam—an on-board radar screen designed to give a picture of the terrain and cities beneath regardless of darkness and cloud cover.

The Stalingrad drama ended. Sixteen army generals, including Paulus,

chose Soviet captivity to death and glory on the battlefield. The army's General Erwin Jaenecke, flown injured out of Stalingrad on one of the last planes, urged Hitler to punish the guilty men—"Even," he spat out, "if that means the Reichsmarschall himself!" But Göring was not to be seen. His diary shows that he spent much of the next week at Emmy's hospital bedside—she had been operated on by Professor Gohrbandt for sinus problems on February 1—and he manifested no urgent desire to face his Führer. Hitler vented his rage on Jeschonnek instead—then clapped the unhappy general on the shoulder after the conference and reassured him, "It wasn't you I meant!" "I alone bear responsibility for Stalingrad," he frankly admitted to Field Marshal von Manstein on February 6—but then devalued that acceptance of the blame by adding, "I could pin the blame onto Göring . . . but he is my designated successor. So I can not."

Reassured by General Bodenschatz that Hitler was not disposed to blame him, Göring slunk back in to the Wolf's Lair later in February. Hitler avoided puncturing his pride. Göring's posture at this time is described in an insightful entry of Richthofen's diary—the Luftflotte 4 commander had arrived at Rominten on the tenth, to find Göring just setting out to hunt wild boar. They dined alone together, and commiserated about the soldier's hard lot. "As you know," said Göring, carving juicy chunks off a leg of veal served to him as a third course, "the only luxury I allow myself is to have fresh flowers sent in from time to time." He admitted having approved of the Stalingrad airlift, but only because he expected the encirclement to be temporary. Then the Italian Army had collapsed, and this had triggered the catastrophe.

Richthofen ventured the remark that Göring ought to have risked going in person to the Stalingrad battlefield. "If you can't trust in your own lucky star," he said, "then you have no right to believe in your destiny in larger things. None of our army commanders is a Caesar or an Alexander," he continued. "But they all know their job and do their duty. They just need to be given tasks they understand." He praised Manstein in particular.

The next morning, February 11, they went to see Hitler. Richthofen repeated his comments. "If I didn't straitjacket my commanders," Hitler told Richthofen tersely, "they would all be fighting on German soil by now."

Göring nodded tame approval. He did attempt one diffident interpolation, but Hitler deftly deflected the conversation to the Old Burg Theater in Vienna. "Now that," chortled Hitler, aware of Göring's pride in his Prussian State Theater, "was really art, of a kind you don't find too often nowadays."

Assembling all the Luftwaffe's top generals at Rominten for three days of confidential consultations ("to go over everything, issue guidelines, and deliver a pep talk for the coming months," as he put it in his diary) Göring was frank about the gravity of the crisis that now faced Nazi Germany. General Karl Koller, chief of staff of Luftflotte 3, took this shorthand note:

None

We've suffered the gravest possible setback in the east [said Göring]. Irrelevant who's to blame. . . . After thirty-six of our allies' divisions on either flank simply vanished, ran away, our whole overextended front was bound to collapse. . . . We have lost regions of paramount importance for our nutrition, and moreover everything left behind represents a horrendous loss to our own food supplies. We abandoned 157,000 tons of harvested and stockpiled oil seeds of immense importance for our supply of fats. Besides, the enemy successes have naturally given a huge boost to their morale. Africa is a complete write-off, Suez is now beyond our reach, and the enemy is drawing very close to us in the south. Plus their invasion of North Africa. . .

What might the enemy do next? They may land in Sardinia, that won't cause any problems; possibly Sicily. The main danger is to Portugal, intelligence on this is hardening. . . . In charge of Spain is a weakling [Franco] who has the worst possible counsel: cowardice! . . . And add to this the very real danger that the enemy may turn against Brittany and Normandy. There is also the possibility that he may undertake an invasion of Norway, not on a large scale but in regimental strength, possibly using ski troops; American troops are standing by in Scotland and they might be airlifted to Norway.

Extraordinary armaments potential of the Americans, danger of poison-gas warfare: The Americans are in favor, because of course nothing can happen in their own country; the British are probably set against it but won't be able to get their way with the United States, which is interested only in swallowing the British Empire and tossing Europe to the Bolsheviks. Britain is playing a game nobody can understand any longer. She's bound to go under—the game she's playing—even if she is on the victorious side.

We have these allies: one who fights magnificently [Japan], fights like a German, but is far away. . . . A second ally [Italy] who is absolutely useless; not one of its divisions is worth anything at all; an entire army [the Italian Eighth Army] that ran away and was going to be sent into the partisan area has now reported that it does not feel a match for the bandits. They weren't even able to pacify the Balkans, although the enemy there only has muskets and not one piece of artillery.

All this shows how grim the situation is. To underline our ultimate war aim I can only repeat what the Führer said in his speech. At the end of this war there will only be the survivors and the dead: It is madness to believe there can be a salvation if Bolshevism triumphs! . . . We cannot say how much use the

European nations will be. Spain perhaps; France, torn inside out, won't help, she will rise against us when it comes to the crunch; the same goes for Norway. We have not one of the nations we have occupied on our side. Italy's weakness is undeniable, its military strength is zero. Domestically, defeatism rules supreme. just a few Fascists are holding the whole thing together, nobody else is working, let alone fighting. The awful thing is that the Duce can not even trust his own son-in-law [Ciano] and had to sack him. . . .

The next biggest danger is southern Russia. Stalingrad: the question was whether or not to pull out. At first there was no reason to, we were entitled to the view that our troops were strong enough there to hold on until relieved. . . . If the men had fought harder, particularly in Stalingrad itself, we should still have the city today and it would not have been captured. Paulus was too weak, he didn't turn Stalingrad into a proper fortress. Thousands of Russian civilians were fed along with his troops. He should have sacrificed them ruthlessly so that his soldiers had enough to survive, and that goes for the hopelessly injured—they shouldn't have been dragged along but allowed to fade away. The Paulus army just relied on the Luftwaffe and expected miracles from it. . . . And then this army's chief of staff General [Arthur] Schmidt has the gall to say, "The Luftwaffe has committed the biggest treachery in history because it could not manage to supply the Paulus army." The army lost its airfields—how on earth was a mass airlift supposed to be possible after that?

That spring Hans Thomsen, the new Nazi ambassador to Sweden, visited Göring. He found the Reichsmarschall wearing his golden dagger, leather jerkin, and puffy silk sleeves. After driving Thomsen around his Carinhall estate, Göring changed into an arresting kimono of violet-colored silk for dinner. A diamond-studded brooch graced his neck, a bejeweled belt his paunch.

At about the same time Göring admitted to Ribbentrop's Staatssekretär, Ernst von Weizsäcker, that he was worried about the future. "It's not quite clear to me how we are going to end this war," he said.

JET-PROPELLED

Göring's air force had airlifted into Stalingrad 8,350 tons of supplies, a daily average of 116 tons.

But he had lost 266 Junkers 52 transports, 165 Heinkel 111 bombers, and 42 Junkers 86 bombers—virtually an entire air corps. “I always believed in the strategic use of air power,” he would tell renowned American aviation philosopher Alexander Seversky a few days after the war ended. “My beautiful bomber fleet was exhausted in transporting munitions and supplies to the army at Stalingrad. I was always against the Russian campaign.”

Shown the new aircraft-production program by Milch when he received him for the first time in five weeks on February 22, 1943, he bleated the complaint that it seemed to show nothing new even for 1946.

Milch pointedly reminded him that their only four-engined bomber project had been killed off as long ago as 1937. The field marshal felt that Göring's eyes looked perhaps more glazed than usual this day.

Depressed by the austerity of Berlin, Göring retired to his villa on the Obersalzberg. Pili Körner begged Emmy to talk him into approaching Hitler about seeking an honorable peace with one enemy or the other while he still could. It is unlikely that Göring ever did, but during February the pressure

did grow on him to revive the Little Cabinet of the first war weeks—the Reich Defense Committee. Milch took it up with Speer; Speer got Goebbels's backing for the idea, and came down to the mountainside villa on the last day of February. Göring talked with him for several hours. The minister was fascinated by the apparently rouged cheeks and lacquered fingernails of the Reichsmarschall. Before bringing Goebbels back with him the next afternoon, Speer warned the propaganda minister that Göring was "rather resigned." Göring was wearing what Goebbels dryly described as "a somewhat baroque costume, which would look rather grotesque if one did not know him so well." Both ministers tried to restore the Reichsmarschall's waning self-confidence; he turned down the Little Cabinet idea. "I gained the impression," wrote Milch in his memoirs, "he was afraid of Hitler."

That night, March 1–2, the British weakened his bargaining position still further by blitzing Berlin. The raid gashed the Air Ministry, started six hundred fires, wrecked twenty thousand buildings, and killed seven hundred Berliners. Hitler ordered massive retaliation against London, but only a dozen planes even found the empire's sprawling capital. "When is the Reichsmarschall coming back?" asked Hitler irritably of his staff at midday on the fifth. (Stenographers recorded his words.) "This can't go on! We'll never cut the British down to size like this!"

Göring, however, had fled to Rome, to see Mussolini and—no doubt, incidentally—his art-dealer friends. From the letter that the Fascist dictator wrote to Hitler a few days later, it is clear that the Italians were again begging Nazi Germany to make peace with Stalin on whatever terms they could get.

The papers of Walter Hofer reveal how Göring comforted himself after the meeting with Mussolini. Visiting the country estate of art dealer Eugenio Ventura in Florence on March 8, he decided to acquire various objets d'art, including four Italian and Tyrolean paintings and triptychs, and four wood carvings of garlands. Greedy to lay hands on them, he instructed his staff to load them aboard his train immediately. "It's getting late already," he remarked suavely, "so I'd better take the things with me right away."

In exchange, he offered nine nineteenth-century works confiscated in France, including three Monets and works by Sisley, Cézanne, Degas, Renoir, and Van Gogh, which Hofer had removed to Florence in December for "restoration."

Further crates were loaded aboard, of objects bought from Count Contini, including a sixteenth-century walnut bench, a table, a large medicine cabinet, a prayer stool, and religious and hunting sculptures, a marble "Aphrodite After the Bath" purchased from Iandolo in Rome, and ten items bought from Grassi in Florence, including a bust of the Emperor Hadrian. Lost in the familiar art collector's trance, Göring had put the war behind him.

Scathing about the absentee Reichsmarschall, Hitler discussed the new violent RAF raids with Goebbels and Speer at the Wolf's Lair. That afternoon, March 8, 1943, he described Göring as being oblivious of the war in the

air, and totally misinformed by his ex-Richthofen Squadron cronies like Bodenschatz. "While I brood day and night on how to stop these air raids," an adjutant heard him say, "the Reichsmarschall leads his carefree life."

That night the RAF dropped eight hundred tons of bombs on medieval Nuremberg. Hitler had Bodenschatz fetched out of bed and raged at him.

Twenty-four hours later Munich was the British bombers' target. The fear of German retaliation was evidently no deterrent at all. Hitler blamed this on Göring's portly friend Field Marshal Hugo Sperrle, who had set up his Luftflotte 3 headquarters in a French château. "He has about as much interest in bombing Britain as in wolfing down a gourmet dinner," said Hitler, and ordered Göring back from Italy.

To his adjutant Jeschonnek remarked emptily that perhaps he ought to commit suicide—then Göring might mend his ways. The remark revealed how much the general was being pulverized between these heaving millstones of the high command. Later that spring the adjutant managed to wrest a revolver out of Jeschonnek's hand—he heard the general muttering about wanting to be buried in East Prussia on the shores of Lake Goldap.

He arrived back at the Wolf's Lair at 4:00 P.M. on March 11, 1943, chatted for a while with Rommel, who had relinquished command of his army in Tunisia the previous day, and slunk in to see Hitler at 9:30.

Hitler gave Göring one more chance to redeem himself.

Göring put pressure on to his plane manufacturers. Assembling them for a ninety-minute tirade at Carinhall a week later, he ladled vitriol over them—the Professors Messerschmitt, Heinkel, and Dornier—for Germany's "total failure" in aviation technology. "I have been deceived," he roared, "on a scale to which I was hitherto accustomed only in the variety acts of magicians and conjurers." "There are some things, which were reported to me before the war as completely ready, but which are *still* not even ready today!" To which remark he significantly added, "I am not talking of the eastern theater at all. When I speak of the 'enemy' now, I am referring only to the enemy in the west."

"The most modest requirement," he shrieked at Messerschmitt, "is that your aircraft must take off and land without their pilots risking every bone in their body." He glared at Heinkel: "I was promised a heavy bomber. The Heinkel 177. After calamity upon calamity they tell me, 'If only the plane didn't have to dive, it would be the finest bird in the world—it could go into service at once. At once! I declare at once, 'It doesn't *have to dive!*' But now that it's been tried in operations there have been catastrophic losses, none caused by enemy action. So, Mr. Heinkel, what do you say today! And how many will go up in flames? Half of them! . . . How *amused* we all were about the enemy's backwardness, their 'plodding four-engined crates,' and so on. Gentlemen, I'd be delighted if you'd just copy one of their four-engined crates, double-quick! Then at least I'd have a plane to brag about!"

So he raged on. (The transcript covered one hundred pages.) "That's what

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gets under my skin," he said at one stage. "They can drop their bombs through cloud cover into a pickle barrel in a railroad station, but our gentlemen 'can't quite find London.'" His admiration of the British electronic equipment was limitless. "I have long been aware," he said, "that there is nothing the British do not have. Whatever equipment we have, the enemy can jam it without so much as a by-your-leave. We accept all this as though it were God's will, and when I get steamed up about it, the story is we haven't got the workers. . . . Gentlemen, it isn't manpower you're short of, it's brain-power." The British H2S radar set—first recovered from the RAF bomber at Rotterdam—was a fine example. It filled half a dozen steel cabinets. No German bomber was big enough to carry them. "That's because they have built those 'old four-engined crates,'" he mimicked. "Aircraft so big you could lay out a dance floor in them!"

He rounded on General Wolfgang Martini, the shy and academic chief of Luftwaffe signals. "I refuse to be led a song and dance like this," he declared. "The enemy can actually see whether he is over a city or not, right through the clouds. We cannot jam him. You tell me that we also have something, and in the same breath you add, 'But it can all be jammed by the enemy!'"

Later that month Göring retreated to Berchtesgaden, and tried to clear his mind. The catastrophic air raids on Berlin and the Ruhr were increasing in violence, and now the American bombers were joining in. The Reich had lost fifteen thousand dead in air raids. On April 4, American daylight raids killed 229 Frenchmen in Paris and 221 Italians in Naples; on the fifth, the U.S. bomber squadrons killed 2,130 Belgian civilians in Antwerp. Telephoning Goebbels in Berlin on the sixth—fully aware that the Forschungsamt would courier reports of his scathing language to Göring—Milch heaped obloquy on the Reichsmarschall's name.

Intervening in Luftwaffe operations, Hitler ordered fighter squadrons switched to the Russian front. "It's out of the question," Göring ranted over the phone to Jeschonnek. "It's about time you learned to stand up to the Führer." Swamped in the east, run out of Africa, almost nonexistent in the west, his air force struggled to survive. Troubled by the Reich's growing food shortage and threats of cuts in the meat ration, Göring took refuge in bed. His diary shows April 1943 ending with visits from Hitler's surgeon Karl Brandt and his own doctor Ondarza, who helpfully prescribed still more bed rest.

Göring still found time for less martial pursuits—he inquired of Fräulein Limberger "whether the amethysts were ready," he ordered designer shoes from Perugia for little Edda's birthday, and drove down to Munich with Emmy to buy expensive china. Richthofen turned up once on the Obersalzberg, and noted in his diary on April 26 that he feared that Stalingrad and the latest North Africa debacle had "put the skids" under Göring for good.

In Tunisia 250,000 more German troops went into enemy captivity. Göring now took refuge in his childhood castle at Veldenstein, and here he would stay until the end of May 1943. Milch came down on the thirteenth to tender

what he circumspectly entered in his notes only as "general advice on the overall situation." That situation now seemed totally intractable. Just ten enemy planes droning high overhead on a ten-day drove twenty-five million Germans into their shelters. On the sixteenth, RAF bombers using special rotating bombs collapsed the massive Eder and Möhne dams, drowning 1,217 people in the ensuing flood disasters. General Dittmar recorded three days later that the high command was stunned at the Reichsmarschall's failure even to show his face in the stricken Ruhr cities now.

Göring lingered behind his medieval battlements at Veldenstein. He snoozed in the sunshine, went for drives in the surrounding forests. Scarcely anybody came to consult with him—the Göring diary glimpses only Beppo Schmid fetching his Knight's Cross, General Hube arriving from Italy to report, General Kastner coming to brief him on the dams. While the heartless nocturnal carnage continued, Göring followed events at a safe distance, talking to Bodenschatz, shouting over the phone to Jeschonnek ("Send photos of Ladoga, Leningrad, and Novorossisk to the Führer!"). His air force, meanwhile, was barely denting London. KG2 and KG6 raised only seventy or eighty bombers to attack London, Norwich, Hastings, and Bournemouth. On one night, May 23–24, the British effortlessly dropped over two thousand tons of bombs on Dortmund in the Ruhr.

The Reichsmarschall lay low, humiliated and angry.

"My people tell me, 'We're not sure we can find London at night,' " he mimicked, months later. "But their guys fly over to a dam that's socked in with fog, and whack right into it."

Just at this lowest ebb in his fortunes, Göring had a visitor who brought hope. Colonel Adolf Galland, the young, cigar-chomping general of fighters, came on the twenty-fifth to talk about that Messerschmitt 262 jet fighter—the first operational jet fighter in the world. He had test-flown it three days before. "The bird flies," he said. "It flies like there's an angel pushing."

The Me 262 was a clear 130 miles per hour faster than the Me 109G, the fastest German conventional fighter. "If the enemy sticks to the piston engine," wrote Galland in the report he handed to Göring, "the Me 262 is going to give us an unimaginable lead."

Even as Göring took in these words, Milch came on the phone from Berlin. It would, he said, be quite feasible to slot the jet straight into the mass-production program. "I want your permission," asked Milch, "to drop the Me 209 and turn out every 262 we can, as a matter of urgency."

Göring panicked. He hated decisions. He threw a glance at Colonel Galland, listening on the second earpiece. "Well?"

Galland nodded.

"Agreed!" said Göring.

"Dump the Me 209, replace with Me 262," recorded Milch in his pocket diary.

EXIT JESCHONNEK

On the night that Colonel Galland saw Göring about the Me 262, RAF Bomber Command thumped two thousand tons of bombs into Düsseldorf, capital city of the Ruhr. Two days later the RAF's wooden Mosquitoes bombed the Zeiss precision optical works at Jena. "Jena," roared Göring, "is right in the heart of Germany! What cheek, that's all I can say: and what contempt for our own fighter forces!" Two nights later still, the RAF left 2,450 dead and 118,000 homeless in the little Ruhr valley town of Wuppertal.

As the towns and cities crumpled in ruins, Göring vacationed at his mountain villa above Berchtesgaden, inferring that provided he did not bomb Churchill, the latter, being a gentleman, would not bomb him. That spring of 1943 he met only infrequently with his Führer, now recuperating himself from the winter's ordeals only a few hundred yards up the Obersalzberg hillside and brooding upon Citadel, his coming great tank offensive at Kursk.

A surviving handwritten notebook kept by Göring in those months reveals how extensively his horizon was clouded by the war in the air—by the thundering squadrons of B-17's, Lancasters, and Mosquitoes. The breaching of the Ruhr dams had shaken him badly, and he cast around for revenge. "Bigger barrage balloons," he wrote. Later he added, "Very hard for me

scene

to know of all our important objectives. Führer must decide new defense priorities," and he made the note: "All Reich agencies and party districts must report immediately their most vital air-defense targets."

He turned his mind to possible ways of hitting back. "Scottish dams. Heavy raids [on] Russia, nuisance raids on the Urals." A later entry shows that he felt that General Robert Ritter von Greim's Luftflotte 6 was only "bespattering" the Russian targets with its haphazard attacks; he decided to place two or three Geschwader (wings) of near-obsolete He 111's under one air-corps command on the eastern front to execute heavy night raids on Kuibyshev, Moscow, and the more distant Soviet arsenals. "Handfuls of planes won't even dent these gigantic plants," he observed. "But if one or two hundred bombers batter them, time after time, then we'll get somewhere!"

In the same notebook he wrote reminders to commission Professor Kurt Tank to design a wooden bomber like the Mosquito, and to ask for volunteers for anti-Mosquito operations, and "a particularly dashing officer" to command them—he jotted down shortly the names of two suitable candidates: "Graf and Ihlefeld—job, tackling the Mosquitoes." He also crowded the pages with notes about missile attacks on warships, flak for the Ruhr and U-boat yards, and setting up a long-range strategic bombing force equipped with the new Heinkel 177 and Junkers 290 four-engine bombers, adopting the Americans' "tight squadron formation" tactics. "How come the British," he wrote, "can operate their bombers by day, with or without fighters, while we are hard pushed to operate at night? We need new fighter tactics against the big fighter-escorted bomber formations," he reflected. "Pelz and Storp," he entered hopefully on June 1, "have a few surprises up their sleeve, like intruding [German bombers] into the returning British bomber stream [and] long-range night fighting."

That day he had signed the Me 262 jet fighter into mass production. He recorded in his other pocket diary notes for briefing Hitler on the Luftwaffe, "My intentions." The air force should, in short, become the main weapon against the Atlantic convoys. "The British will then have to mount colossal operations against us in the Atlantic." Submarines could finish off the scattered merchantmen. He intended to overhaul the Luftwaffe's incompetent organization in France, and noted criticisms of the luxurious command posts installed by the Luftwaffe in various French châteaux. "It is just not possible," he wrote, "for everybody to have their own command apparatus. I'm going to set up defense districts with one person in charge of the day fighters, night fighters, flak artillery, and all signals units. . . . And one common radio frequency for the whole country."

In further random jottings that June Göring foreshadowed his later allegations of cowardice. Formulating his opinions on his fighter pilots, he listed the four determining factors as "Technology—numbers—morale—officers." "Basically," he more realistically assessed, "our wafer-thin re-

sources are to blame. We don't concentrate anywhere. We are inferior. So we are pushed back all along the line. Air power holds the key—as witness the efforts of our enemies.”

Pelz, now a major-general, had suffered grievous losses in restarting the blitz on Britain. In March 1943 alone, KG 2, based in Holland, had lost twenty-six crews. Over the following months Göring was obliged to limit operations to only two squadrons of FW 190's and Me 410's carrying out high-speed nuisance attacks by full moon on targets like Hull, Norwich, Ipswich, Chelmsford, Portsmouth, Plymouth, and Cardiff. The “Kammhuber Line,” Göring's ponderous, extravagant night-fighter defense organization, meanwhile proved incapable of halting the concentrated British bomber tactics. Terrifying conflagrations ravaged the German cities. On June 11, the RAF again dropped two thousand tons of bombs on Düsseldorf. Thousands more civilians were killed in a second fire raid on little Wuppertal. Still Hitler and Göring hankered after ways of hitting back at Britain, when their air force could not even do damage now to Russia.

One of Göring's lengthier diary entries that June shows that he was not entirely insensible to advice:

Our air force in Russia is fresh and keen! Willing to fight but weak in manpower, technical staff, and planes, because reinforcements don't keep pace. They feel that they're being used like a fire brigade everywhere, that they can't stage mass raids of their own and that they don't get much chance to relax—just dogsbodies to the army!! Tossed this way and that—this army one day, that the next, and then back again. Particularly damaging how the Geschwader get split up: This freezes out the Geschwader commodores, although they're very important people. Three squadrons may be operating from the same base, but each belongs to a different Geschwader . . .

The troops want a reasonable degree of forward planning and not just these fire-brigade duties.

Hitler was planning ahead. While he plotted Citadel, his final tank offensive at Kursk, Göring lingered on at his nearby mountain villa, sitting in his white uniform in the sunshine or strolling with Emmy. The news from the Ruhr did not encourage him to attend Hitler's daily conferences at the Berghof.

One afternoon, however, June 18, Ulrich Diesing came—Göring's bright new young technical officer. Diesing brought tidings of a revolutionary new Luftwaffe missile that promised to be a means of hitting back at the British after all—a small, steel-skinned robot plane that would carry a one-ton warhead over two hundred or three hundred miles. A Luftwaffe unit at Peenemünde, on the Baltic, had tested fifty already, and thirty-five of these

prototypes had functioned perfectly. Field Marshal Milch was planning, said Ulrich, to mass produce five thousand a month. Greedy for revenge, Göring added a zero to the figure on the document: *fifty* thousand; and ordered construction work to begin immediately on the first one hundred catapult-launching sites along the French coast. "The enemy air force will be obliged to attack these launching sites," predicted Milch in a letter to Göring a few days later, "and our fighter planes and flak will have wonderful opportunities to inflict annihilating damage on them." Göring began to savor the moment when he could not only launch these flying bombs against London but against General Dwight D. Eisenhower's supply ports in North Africa and—from the decks of U-boats cruising off the American coast—even against the skyscrapers of New York too.

All this lay some time in the future. Meanwhile a number of urgent personnel problems had to be faced. Smoldering over Göring's insensitive recourse to his own "little air staff" of Brauchitsch, Diesing, and Ondarza, the chief of air staff, Hans Jeschonnek, reported "sick"—or so his deputy General Rudolf Meister told Göring on June 21, 1943. Probably the illness was more psychological than real, because the cure that Göring contemplated was giving Jeschonnek command of a Luftflotte (the Fourth) and sending Richt-hofen up to *Robinson*, the Luftwaffe's forward headquarters, to supplant him. Had Göring not always accused Jeschonnek of being too pliable at the Wolf's Lair? "You just stand at attention to the Führer, with your thumbs on your pant seams!" he had jeered. The job switch looked like the ideal solution, but Göring hesitated to appoint such a forceful, blunt-spoken character as Richthofen to Hitler's conference table. So the decision was postponed, not once but several times.

Göring's own stock was too low at present. People in the Ruhr were bitter that he did not show his face there. "This," wrote Goebbels after seeing Hitler on June 22, "is why Göring's failure oppresses [Hitler] so much: because he's the only man capable of taking over if anything should happen to him."

Summoned to the Führer's presence the next day, Göring penciled into his notebook reminders that betray an apprehensive state of mind:

Situation in the south! In the southeast! In the north! My own position as commander in chief. Jeschonnek (on leave)—Milch (Udet) controversy. My own activities (stenographic record, produce my appointment diary). Influencing subordinates, consulting with them. Troops' confidence in me.

Worst will be over this autumn. Inspection visits by me. Examples, Vienna airplane-engine works!

My present task: Overhauling the air force. Clear technological objectives. Revive flagging spirits.

"Please," he intended to tell Hitler, "make use of Bodenschatz for any wishes, complaints, or orders." This was not good enough for Hitler. Perhaps at Martin Bormann's suggestion—because the latter entered it in his diary—Hitler called in all the aircraft designers four days later and, telling them not to breathe a word of this to Göring, grilled them about the chaos in the industry.

Göring had more immediate preoccupations. Operating one thousand bombers most nights now, the RAF was executing ruthless saturation raids on every Ruhr city, dumping two thousand tons of bombs on Krefeld, 1,640 tons on Mülheim and Oberhausen, 1,300 tons on Gelsenkirchen. When the American bombers now joined in by day, wrecking the vital Nazi oil refinery at Hüls on June 22, Milch reminded Göring in an alarmed letter that half of their entire synthetic-fuel capacity was concentrated in the Ruhr, within easy bombing range. Milch urged that the Führer be prevailed on to divert June's entire fighter production to the air defense of the Reich. As if this were not enough, Göring's experts now sent a two-page report advising that the British could at any time poison the radar defenses with showers of aluminium foil; there was, warned the unfortunate signals chief Martini, as yet no antidote. Frightened of giving the enemy even a hint about this awful device, Göring halted all German research into the "antidote" that Martini mentioned.

Instead, he continued to search for unorthodox solutions to the problems of air defense. On the day that Hitler secretly hosted his meeting with the aircraft designers, Göring was holding a discussion with his top bomber experts, the buccaneering majors Werner Baumbach and Hajo Herrmann. Herrmann had recently taken a single-seater plane up to observe RAF night-bombing techniques for himself—the dazzling spectacle of cascading pyrotechnic flares. He had not needed radar at all. The enemy bombers were clearly silhouetted against clouds lit by the fires, flares, flashes, and flak from beneath. His proposal was to throw hundreds of single-seater fighter planes at the British, crewed by *day*-fighter and even bomber pilots.

Again Göring followed closely, as his handwritten notes show:

Free-lance single-engined night fighting! Major Herrmann. Combat over target area using searchlights. New tactics in conjunction with flak. In the Ruhr often a hundred [bombers are held] in searchlights—forty during the big raid on Berlin.

Our present system does not permit night fighters to mass at [bomber] point of penetration [of Kammhuber Line]. Use 200-centimeter [searchlight] with Mars radar to guide fighters. Enemy will be sighted even in haze as the 200 is radar-controlled. . . . Best thing is to shoot down the Illuminators [RAF Pathfinders] and then send in our own Illuminators.

Göring authorized the major to begin trials. Milch backed the bold scheme, in a letter. "Given the right weather," he wrote on June 29, "we can expect substantial success." Major Hermann transferred his experimental unit to the Ruhr, and waited for the next RAF attack.

The Allies were about to invade southern Europe, perhaps Sicily. The Reichsmarschall had summoned Kesselring to Berchtesgaden late in May to discuss defense measures. The field marshal warned that the German Air Force there was exhausted. "We are not capable of defending Sicily against a determined assault," wrote Göring in his diary. "Italian Air Force completely useless. . . . Transport network catastrophic, no low-loaders for tanks."

Göring's immediate solution was to transfer Richthofen—now a field marshal—from Luftflotte 4 on Manstein's front in Russia to Luftflotte 2 in Italy until the invasion crisis there was over. He called Richthofen to see him on the Obersalzberg on June 11.

Reichsmarschall pretty critical of Kesselring's direction of the battle [recorded the Luftflotte commander in his diary] but emphasizes that there is still the same old trust between them (or so he says). . . . I have to point out that the net result for me is less pleasant. I haven't the faintest idea whether I can run the war any differently and stress that any new arrangement in the south is bound to take time.

Citadel, Hitler's ground-shaking final attempt to regain the strategic initiative in the east, was about to begin. Spring vacation in Bavaria over, Göring followed him back to East Prussia and sat in on the speech that Hitler delivered on the first day of July to his Citadel commanders. He promised that they would have sixteen hundred tanks, but they knew that the Russians had three thousand. The room was icy and unheated, and Hitler found it difficult to rouse enthusiasm. Several generals allowed their gaze to wander. General Otto von Knobelsdorff recalled two years later that the Reichsmarschall looked "goofier" (*mehr verblödet*) than ever. "Hermann [Göring]," he told fellow prisoners, "sat next to [Hitler], wilting more and more from one quarter-hour to the next, until his face looked downright sheepish. He kept stuffing himself with pills and then perked up again for a while." Manstein picked a fight with Göring, demanding the immediate return of the irreplaceable Richthofen at least for the duration of Citadel. Göring jealously refused.

Still seething, he summoned all his own field marshals to the hunting lodge at Rominten for the next two days. He thus set eyes on Milch for the first time since May. The field marshal had had the thankless duty of touring the cratered Ruhr cities. He brandished a recommendation for quadrupling the day-fighter force "until we ram the American victories down their throats." "You don't imagine I read the trash you write!" shouted Göring, humiliating

Milch in front of all the others. The commander in chief, flak, General Walter von Axthelm, got the same short shrift. "You bloody fools fired so little," the Reichsmarschall shouted across the room at him, "that those swine [the Americans] have destroyed Hils!"

Profoundly mistrustful of Kesselring's ability to interpret the signs in Italy correctly, Göring asked Richthofen to come to Rominten on July 3. The field marshal found the hunting lodge thronged with thirty or forty generals.

I was promptly called in [wrote Richthofen upon his return to Luftwaffe headquarters, Rome] and set out the purely military position. . . . Lunch was to have been followed by a big conference, but instead of this the Reichsmarschall took me out into the country alone and asked me what's going on down here. . . . Nothing I have found out about the military setup and morale surprised him.

Reichsmarschall is petrified I may sneak back to the eastern front. While agreeing to serve where duty calls, I admit I would prefer to resume command of Luftflotte 4, though I accept that if I am to keep my eye on things I must stay down here, reluctant though I am . . . I have no freedom of action here as the whole Luftflotte [2] still pays homage to [Kesselring] so long as he is here.

Over at the Wolf's Lair, Jeschonnek pleaded with Richthofen to get him the Luftflotte 4 command. The next day, July 4, while Jeschonnek flew out to Luftflotte 4 to get the feel of Citadel, Richthofen sat around Rominten. "They're at the trough all day long here," he observed caustically. He tagged along that afternoon to the Wolf's Lair with Göring, who conferred *à deux* with Hitler. Hitler firmly squelched the idea of exchanging Jeschonnek for Richthofen, and reverted to the major war problems. "No time to raise the less immediate issues," recorded Richthofen, disappointed, "as major problems overshadowed all else." However, he did add this: "Führer and Reichsmarschall are hugely optimistic about the future of the war," and there were reasons for this cautious optimism. During the night Major Herrmann's experimental flight had shot down a dozen RAF bombers over Cologne. "You just have to hang around their flare clusters," Herrmann reported on July 6. He voiced the opinion that a proper force of such "free-lance" night fighters could destroy eighty bombers a night.

The defense of the Reich began to dominate Göring's signals, as the British intercepts reveal. "The Reichsmarschall," said one, sent in July to every fighter squadron, "has laid down for the purpose of awarding decorations the following ratio for aircraft shot down by day: destroying one four-engined bomber equals destroying three twin-engined bombers." An angry signal to Colonel Gailand expressed astonishment at his protracted sojourn in sunny

Italy: "The Reichsmarschall expects you to return as soon as possible." Further intercepts revealed to the Allies unwelcome news that "twenty more Me 109's are re-equipping at Erding with 21 cm"—the formidable Nebelwerfer air-to-air rocket—and that the bomber Geschwader KG 100 was equipping one squadron of Do 217's with the rocket-propelled Hs 293 anti-convoy missile and another squadron with the wire-controlled Fritz X, an armor-piercing bomb for attacking heavy warships. That month, July 1943, Göring's factories produced one thousand fighter planes for the first time. The post-Udet era was beginning.

Citadel, the biggest, bloodiest tank battle in history, began in Russia on July 6, 1943. The initial euphoria was soon forgotten as news came on the ninth that the Allies had invaded Sicily. In East Prussia the Reichsmarschall clung to the long-distance telephone, roasting his generals in Rome. "Long talk with Reichsmarschall this evening," wrote Richthofen on the tenth. "He seems frightfully agitated." The next day: "Angry phone call from the Reichsmarschall this evening . . . I calmed him down. Swears furiously at our fighter pilots, who are not, in fact, to blame this time. Soothed him with our own bomber successes. All our bombers out attacking shipping south of Syracuse [in Sicily] tonight."

On July 13, Hitler decided to abandon Citadel. Göring told Milch that day that reinforcing Richthofen would now have top priority. Hitler sent air-force officers Below and Bodenschatz down to Italy to report. "Bodenschatz," wrote Richthofen after lunching with the general, "informs me of fundamental decisions on the prosecution of the war in the east and in the Mediterranean. And," he added gloomily, "they don't appear to have been taken at all voluntarily."

The political importance was that if Sicily was overrun, Italy would probably defect from the alliance, bringing British and American troops—not to mention their bomber squadrons currently based in North Africa—to the very frontiers of the Reich. Hitler conferred with Rommel about this on the eighteenth. "In the east," recorded Rommel, "the Russians are on the attack. . . . The Führer," he added, "is probably going down to meet the Duce."

Göring accompanied Hitler, the latter literally bent double by agonies of apprehension, aboard his Focke-Wulf 200 for the long flight to Italy. Hitler's porcine physician Morell told Göring that his patient had had little sleep despite injections of various morphine substitutes.

In the [FW 200] Condor [recorded Morell] Reichsmarschall Göring ventured to give me a few last-minute tips. "You must give him Euflat," he said. * "That once helped me a lot." "Yes, two

*Göring got the names wrong initially but Dr. von Ondarza corrected him. Euflat was a proprietary

tablets three times a day: I'm doing it already." "But you've got to keep doing it over a long period. I took them for eighteen months. And then you must give him Luizym too!"

"We're already doing that!"

As Hitler met Mussolini in northern Italy, news came that the Allies were raining bombs on Rome. He parted from Mussolini convinced that the Italians—for all their protestations to the contrary—were on the brink of defecting.

"I can only keep saying," Milch told Göring a few days earlier, "1943 is going to be a year of clenched teeth—but in 1944 things are going to change dramatically. And we're going to see the first of these changes this autumn."

Hitler wanted those changes now. "You can only smash terror with terror," he snarled at Göring and his generals on July 23, 1943. "You've got to strike back! Anything else is nonsense." Scornful of Göring's latest plans for small-scale intruder raids against RAF airfields, Hitler snorted, "You can count yourself lucky if you find *London*!" "The British will stop," he shouted, still fuming, at his staff two days later, "only when it's their cities that are being wrecked. I won't have a monkey made out of me, and that's what I tell the Reichsmarschall. I don't mince my language with him."

Shaken by this downturn in their personal relations, Göring hurried to Rechlin in *Asia* on the twenty-fourth, and watched with Milch as the fourth prototype of the Me 262 streaked majestically past. The howl of the twin Jumo 004 jet engines—a sound that not many people in the world had heard until then—gave the two Luftwaffe chiefs newfound confidence.

That night the RAF began Operation Gomorrah, a macabrely named attempt at literally wiping out an entire city with its population. Cascading tons of aluminum foil to blind the German radar defenses—precisely the electronic trick that Göring had feared and forbidden his own forces—the RAF smashed Hamburg hard, killing fifteen hundred civilians for the loss of only twelve bombers.

"One single suburb," gasped Hitler at midday on July 25, "has lost eight hundred dead!" Turning to an air-staff officer he again declared, "The British will stop only when their own cities are being wrecked." Forthwith he signed a decree to Speer to mass-produce the army's A-4 long-range rocket to bombard London.

Although this change of priorities looked like yet another erosion of Göring's role, Hitler still needed Göring—the "Iron Man," as he liked to be called—badly. That evening he phoned Göring: There were reports that Marshal Pietro Badoglio, "our deadliest enemy," had seized power in Italy.

indigestion tablet commonly prescribed against a bloated abdomen. Luizym is a proprietary enzyme tablet to help break down cellulose and carbohydrates in the stomach.—David Irving, *Adolf Hitler: The Medical Diaries* (London & New York, 1983).

The stenographers recorded only Hitler's end of the phone dialogue, but even the Reichsmarschall was evidently incredulous.

HITLER Hello, Göring . . . Did you get the news?

Well, there's still no direct confirmation but hardly any doubt about it—the Duce has quit. Badoglio's stepped into his shoes. . . .

It's a *fact*, Göring, beyond shadow of doubt. What's that? I don't know, we're trying to find out.

Göring suggested they wind up the eastern front altogether. Hitler interrupted him:

That's utter nonsense. *That* goes on, and how! They'd better believe it, that's going on!

I just wanted you to know. You'd all better get over here as fast as you can. . . .

What? I don't know. I'll tell you later. But assume that it is correct.

Arriving at the Wolf's Lair the next morning, the Reichsmarschall found a rare Cabinet-level meeting in progress with Hitler and Grand Admiral Dönitz, the new commander in chief of the navy, as well as Ribbentrop, Speer, Goebbels, and Bormann. Grim but composed, Hitler told them he was convinced, despite the new Badoglio regime's assurances, that Italy was plotting to surrender. Accordingly he planned to switch the crack SS *Leibstandarte* "Adolf Hitler" Division immediately from Russia to Italy. He would evacuate Sicily forthwith—"just like Dunkirk," he said—and allow these seventy thousand crack troops of the "Hermann Göring" Panzer Division and the 1st Paratroop Division to leave behind their heavy weapons if necessary. "They can deal with the Italians with their small arms if need be," he added contemptuously. He would also switch the 2nd Paratroop Division from southern France into Italy. When ready, he would pounce on Rome, arrest the government and king, and "take out" the Vatican too—"Lancing the whole abscess," as he put it.

At the evening war conference thirty-five men crowded around the map table. Göring was silent, and it was Rommel who urged caution. Far better, he argued, to lay the plans with care. "As soon as we act," Göring agreed, "our opponents will scream for help and protection!"

"But it will still take them a finite time to get ready to invade," replied Hitler, referring to the Allies. "First of all they'll be caught completely flatfooted—as usual!"

He prevailed upon Göring to send his paratroop commander Student down to Richthofen carrying a pouch of secret directives for the seizure of Rome. Richthofen was horrified. He recorded that Student was an "absolute idiot"

with no notion of the likely consequences. He told Student not to bother with Göring's orders, as he was flying straight up to get them rescinded.

Saw Reichsmarschall at once [Richthofen wrote, after arriving in East Prussia]. He's staying at the Führer's. Sketched out situation in Rome to him. The people up here have a completely different view, can't believe that Fascism has vanished without trace and maintain that the new regime is on the point of doing a peace deal. I hold out against this view.

Göring took him into Hitler's nine o'clock conference that evening. Rommel was now thirsting for action against the hated Italians. Richthofen stuck doggedly to his guns. They must plan meticulously first. Leaving at eleven-thirty, he subjected Göring to an hour's badgering. "The same thing over and over," wrote the field marshal later. "Did what I could to make him less certain that there are any Fascists extant whatever."

That night a fresh disaster befell Hamburg that had few parallels in history. The British bombers struck again, and nothing could prevent them from dropping thousands of tons of fire bombs. They uncaged in this ancient Hanseatic port an awful new phenomenon of war, the "fire storm." The artificial hurricane whipped out the window panes, tore off roofs, and catapulted people, trees, and even railway cars into the heart of the infernal flames. The fires flashed through whole streets in seconds, generating blast-furnace temperatures that melted glass, glazed bricks, and reduced every organic and animate object to ashes, after mercifully poisoning them first with invisible gases.

Göring's blood ran cold as he read the first teleprinter messages. He sent Bodenschatz to Hamburg. Gauleiter Karl Kaufmann told him that twenty-six thousand bodies had already been counted—mostly those of women and children. (The night's final death toll would exceed forty-eight thousand.) In Berlin, Speer and Milch were heard soberly proclaiming that Germany had "finally lost the war." Toward midday on the twenty-eighth Göring had his adjutant Brauchitsch phone Milch: "The Reichsmarschall notifies the field marshal that the main effort is to be focused forthwith on the defense of the Reich."

The next morning they met in Berlin, then Göring and Milch took to Hitler a formal proposal for the introduction of a refined version of Herrmann's "free-lance" night-fighting system—guiding entire squadrons of fighters into the RAF "bomber stream," which ironically could now be located the more easily by its own cascades of aluminium foil. During the following night, in the third British attack of the Operation Gomorrah series, Herrmann's pilots brought down eighteen of the twenty-eight bombers destroyed. In its own small way it seemed like a turning point in the air war.

All Germany waited for the next fire storm. "Things can't go on like

this," an SS Obergruppenführer wrote to Himmler on July 30. "Someone's got to speak to the German people. They won't listen to the Reichsmarschall now. Not just because of the obvious supremacy of the enemy air force, but because he has failed to go into the blitzed areas and talk with the people." On August 2, Hamburg was again the RAF target. Milch sent a frantic telegram to Göring, demanding that fighter squadrons be brought back from Russia and even Italy. "It's not the front line that is battered and fighting for life," this telegram said. "It is the fatherland that is under grave attack, and fighting a desperate battle."

Göring cast Hans Jeschonnek, chief of the air staff, as the scapegoat for Hamburg. Jeschonnek crumpled. Beppo Schmid saw it happening, and so did Kurt Student, whom Göring fetched back from Italy to plot ways of liberating Mussolini as soon as his whereabouts could be found. The destruction at Hamburg propelled Jeschonnek into a terminal, three-week-long bout of depression. He had recently lost his father, and his brother and brother-in-law had been killed in action. His frail efforts to escape from the stifling atmosphere of *Robinson* and the Wolf's Lair had been thwarted. As recently as the end of July he had told General von Seidel that he was being given a Luftflotte, but Göring quailed at the idea, and Hitler talked him out of it. After an "all-field-marshal" luncheon with Hitler on July 28, as Richthofen recorded, Göring had touched on possible replacements for Jeschonnek—"I agree a reshuffle is necessary," Richthofen delicately recorded afterward, "but who? He names [Günther] Korten and myself. I recoil in horror, but have to admit I don't think Korten is up to much." Göring, however, abandoned all idea of replacing Jeschonnek. On August 5, Major Werner Leuchtenberg, Jeschonnek's adjutant, broke it to Field Marshal Richthofen in Rome that the Reichsmarschall had used "distinctly pejorative" language about him and had warned his staff, "We've got to make damn sure that the Führer never gets to hear of Richthofen's views!"

Jeschonnek phoned Seidel that same day. "It's all off," he said gloomily. "I've got to stay put."

At the Wolf's Lair the jostling for position began, with Göring reduced to the role of occasional onlooker. He hung around East Prussia until mid-August 1943, observing the comings and goings of the new strongmen. The balance of power there was tilting against him. To Göring it was clear that Hitler was opting for the proponents of brute force. Bormann regularly attended Hitler's main conferences. So did Himmler, who now became minister of the interior. "From now on," Göring would recall, "Bormann had Himmler to contend with as well: because as far as the succession was concerned, Himmler came right after me."

Hitler promised Rommel that he would soon be marching into Italy to restore the Fascist regime. Down in Rome, Richthofen wrote uneasily: "[I]

definitely hope I can superimpose my appreciation of the situation here upon any decisions they take up there"—meaning at the Wolf's Lair.

All that summer, in the shimmering heat of Central Europe, the Allied bombers continued to blast away at the Reich. On the thirteenth, American bombers flew all the way up from North Africa to wreck the Messerschmitt works at Wiener Neustadt. Hitler heaped calumnies on the wilting chief of air staff for four hours afterward. "Why doesn't the Führer say all that to the Reichsmarschall?" whined Jeschonnek. "Why me?"

The answer was that Göring had traveled down to the Obersalzberg, to escape the glare of his fellow ministers and the lash of Hitler's sarcastic tongue. Holing up in Bavaria, he sought solace in his old interests. He phoned Professor Ludwig Peiner about four paintings on offer, "The Four Seasons." Peiner told him with regret that Speer had laid hands on one of them already ("Autumn," a nude lady with a bowl of fruit.) Göring directed Gisela Limberger to see that the professor nominated his two best pupils to escape the draft and paint a new "Autumn" to fill the gap. On the following day, August 17, the Americans pattern-bombed Messerschmitt's works at Regensburg and the ball-bearing factories at Schweinfurt before flying on down to North Africa. Four hundred Messerschmitt workers were killed. Given the chaotic structure of the air-defense command, this further humiliation was not surprising. The defenses were controlled by Jeschonnek in East Prussia, by Göring in Bavaria, by General Weise in Berlin, and by XII Fighter Corps at Arnhem. Even the 4th Fighter Division at Metz, in France, had a finger in the pie. "It was," recalled Dr. von Ondarza, "a wonderful summer's evening." It was also the first time that the American bombers had penetrated so deep into Germany.

Hitler [said Ondarza] took it out on Göring mercilessly by phone, and Göring then put through a very, very long phone call to Jeschonnek. I didn't listen myself, but the SS sentries standing outside the open window said he was ranting and raging frightfully.

A bright moon came up that night. In a mental turmoil Jeschonnek punted out into the middle of Lake Goldap with Leuchtenberg, to watch the evening flight of wild duck. Later he broached a bottle of champagne to toast his daughter's birthday. At 11:00 P.M. word came that RAF Mosquitoes were setting out flares and target markers over Berlin, the chilling heralds of a mass attack. All fifty of Herrmann's "free-lance" fighters were ordered to Berlin. Göring, alerted by phone, directed the Berlin flak to lower its ceiling of fire to eighteen thousand feet. At 11:35 P.M. Metz ordered, "All night fighters to *Bear* [Berlin]." But Berlin was only the decoy. The only planes over the city were the Mosquitoes, Herrmann's men, and some twin-engined nightfighters on whom these trigger happy free-lancers now opened fire. For two hours the slam-bang barrage went on over Berlin.

At 6:00 A.M. the next morning Luftwaffe headquarters learned that the night's real RAF target had been Peenemünde, the top-secret army-missile establishment where the A-4 long-range rocket was being built and tested. It was in flames, and seven hundred rocket scientists and engineers were dead. Jeschonnek was awakened with this awful news at Goldap at 8:00 A.M. Hitler phoned soon after from the Wolf's Lair. "You know what to do!" he snapped. Jeschonnek did—there was precedent enough.

Later that morning a teleprinter message arrived on the Obersalzberg from General Meister. It informed Göring that Jeschonnek had shot himself dead. Betraying no emotions, Göring notified Richthofen in Rome. The laconic telegram merely said that Jeschonnek had died suddenly of a "stomach hemorrhage." Equally stone-faced, Richthofen dictated his own diary comment: "Lost a good comrade and friend. Who will succeed him?"

Göring, of course, had to fly up to East Prussia immediately. Major von Below, Hitler's air-force adjutant, and Meister met him at Rastenburg Airfield. "Jeschonnek promised me he would never do this," said Göring helplessly.

At air-force headquarters Jeschonnek's mortal remains were lying in his little wooden hut. Göring went in alone, and emerged shaking his head. "Some saint!" he sniffed. He ordered Meister to open the general's safe. It contained two envelopes addressed to von Below. The major scanned their content briefly, said simply that they were private, and made no effort to hand them over.

The safe also contained a ten-page memorandum dictated by Jeschonnek to his secretary, Lotte Kersten. Göring read it, his face reddening, then exclaimed, "I forbid staff officers to write down their personal opinions!" (The document recommended that Göring appoint a capable deputy commander in chief.) "Look at this," he cried, brandishing the sheets of paper at Meister. "The man was working against me all along!"

Meister shook his head. "General Jeschonnek was loyal to you to the very end."

Two revealing notes were also found in the desk. One read, "I can't work anymore with the Reichsmarschall! Long live the Führer!" The other cursed the glossy officers of Göring's little air staff. "Diesing and Brauchitsch," it stipulated, "are not to attend my funeral."

As it happened, Kesselring was the only field marshal to attend. Richthofen decided, on balance, not to face the Reichsmarschall right now. Göring admitted to Ondarza that the memorandum had shaken him. "He had no option but to shoot himself," he murmured. "He blamed me and the Luftwaffe for everything." "I am endlessly sorry," he admitted to Pili Körner. "How he must have struggled with himself! I never really knew him before I read that document."

He submitted Jeschonnek's staff to cross-examination. Leuchtenberg told him straight out that Jeschonnek had lost faith in him. Göring adopted an expression of pained innocence. The major reminded him of certain violent

episodes aboard Göring's train. Infuriated, Göring pounded across the room with clenched fists.

"*Herr Reichsmarschall!*" screamed the junior officer, alarmed. "Pull yourself together!"

Göring skidded to a halt, and slumped into a chair.

"How many of you," he roared eventually to the high-ranking officers who had watched this scene, "would have had the courage to tell me what this young man has today!"

He placed both hands on the major's shoulders.

"I'd like you on the air staff. Have a word with Loerzer about it."

He had appointed his crony Loerzer—disgraced by the fiascos in Italy—as chief of personnel. A few days later Leuchtenberg found himself posted to the remotest corner of the eastern front, attached to I Air Corps in the Crimea.

SCHWEINFURT

For the rest of 1943 the tide of the war in the air would ebb and flow dramatically. Aided by new tactics and electronic equipment, Göring's pilots would have temporarily crippled the RAF's night-bombing offensive by the winter of 1943/44; but simultaneously the Americans began throwing precision raids by day deeper into Germany.

For the defense of the Reich Göring had stationed 8,876 of the formidable 88-millimeter flak guns and nearly 25,000 light flak guns. The flak gunners had claimed by the end of September 1943 no less than 12,774 enemy planes, the fighter pilots 48,268 more. Over one hundred thousand German civilians had been killed by the Allied bombing, however, and there was an air of desperation in the streets. In mid-September a glider pilot who had survived Eben Emael and Crete volunteered to form a suicide squadron of men willing to hurl old Junkers 88 bombers packed with high explosives into the midst of American bomber formations (and bail out if they could at the last moment). General Günther Korten, Jeschonnek's successor, put the idea to Göring; the Reichsmarschall shared his reservations.

Göring's own popularity remained undiminished. "Göring swears like a trooper," said one admiring Dornier navigator, shot down in February 1944.

"No doubt about it, though Hermann is very popular, particularly in Berlin." At Hitler's headquarters his arrival was greeted each time with less enthusiasm. On October 27, 1943, as Hitler's distant armies in Russia began to fall back, he reminded the Reichsmarschall that the defense of Western Europe was of paramount importance: because there he could not afford to lose one inch of territory.

The Luftwaffe had lost the initiative, with little prospect of regaining it until the new mass-produced jet airplanes entered service. Thus Göring became the most plausible scapegoat for each Nazi defeat. Speer felt safe in expressing pronounced hostility. On November 8, Rommel too would tell anybody who would listen at the high command that Göring had been to blame for his defeat at El Alamein in 1942—"He just refused to believe the British had air supremacy." On November 20, Milch noted that he had "poured out his heart" to SS Reichsführer Himmler about the Reichsmarschall.

Perspiring freely, the Reichsmarschall had no option but to swallow the insults that Hitler hurled at him, often in front of junior officers. "The Führer's estrangement from me grew," he recalled two years later, speaking with George Shuster. "I could see his impatience when I briefed him. He often cut me off in midsentence, and began to intervene more and more in Luftwaffe affairs."

"Do you think there's a squadron left in your air force with the guts to fly to Moscow?" Hitler would challenge. Ordering him to intervene in Leningrad, he would sneer—"Always assuming that you still have bombers able to fly that far!" Luftwaffe liaison officer Karl Bodenschatz, no more eager than Göring to sweat it out round the clock at the Wolf's Lair, rented overnight rooms at the Park Hotel at Königsberg, and took to fleeing there by Storch each night until Göring found him out. "Your job is to be with the Führer," he snapped.

The Korten era began at 2:00 p.m. on August 20, 1943, when Göring introduced him to Hitler as Jeschonnek's successor as chief of air staff. Over the eleven months until his untimely death in July 1944 General Günther Korten would give the air force a new sense of strategic purpose. Backed by his new deputy, the ponderous, Bavarian-born Lieutenant General Karl Koller, Korten pulled fighter squadrons out of Russia and Italy and transferred them to the defense of the Reich. General Rudolf Meister was given command of the new IV Air Corps, which would bomb the seven main power stations along the Upper Volga, in Moscow, and in Leningrad, on which Soviet tank and aircraft-engine production depended.

The nights were soon long enough for the British to reach Berlin again. The first RAF raid on August 23 killed 765 people. Hitler wanted to strike back, but he knew that reprisals were going to have to wait. Meanwhile British code-breakers heard Korten ordering Luftflotte 4 on August 26 to transfer elements of KG51 bomber wing to Illesheim for conversion to the

new Me 410 with the death-dealing 21-cm Nebelwerfer rocket. Fighter planes were now equipped with the excellent SN2-Lichtenstein cockpit radar, the infrared detector Spanner, and Naxos-Z, a device that homed onto the enemy bombers' H2S on-board radar. Beppo Schmid, now commanding the XII Fighter Corps, had set up a countrywide network to track these radar emissions. To confuse the bombers' radar operators, Göring's engineers had moored reflectors on thousands of lakes and erected jamming transmitters code-named *Roderich* up and down the country; decoy sites as big as cities were torched in the path of the invading aircraft. Each night Göring's controllers fed the fighter squadrons into the bomber stream, led by "shadowers" equipped with sophisticated tracking gear and homing beacons. Each night the single- and twin-engined fighters jostled with the marauding bombers over the guttering cities. Sometimes one controller at Arnhem was directing 250 fighter pilots by running radio commentary.

The RAF fought back with all that deviltry that had won the British a great empire. Planes laden with advanced electronic gear cruised amid the bombers, monitoring, jamming, interfering. Fake fighter "controllers" sent Göring's pilots to the wrong end of Germany or, more devilishly, warned of worsening weather, panicking them into landing prematurely.

Uncertainty about Italy lay like a pall across the Wolf's Lair. When Marshal Badoglio demanded that Germany supply no less than 1.7 million tons of grain, whereas the little-lamented Mussolini had made do with less than 300,000 tons (of which 200,000 tons were returned each time from the somewhat later Italian harvest), it became clear that Badoglio was just searching for a pretext to get out of the war. Göring's agriculture expert Herbert Backe, who visited him at Rominten at the end of August, shared this view.

Backe pleaded with Göring to prevent further retreats in Russia, as Germany was now largely dependent on food imports from there. "If we are really going to fall back on the lines now being sketched in," Backe noted on the last day of August, "I'll have to chuck in the sponge." The Reichsmarschall evidently recognized this too, and promised to mention this "higher up," i.e., to Hitler.

During the meal [Backe wrote in a letter] I sat on the Reichsmarschall's right, with an Oak Leaves holder, the dive-bomber pilot Lieutenant Kupfer on his left. Kupfer spoke with welcome bluntness to him. He said we still don't know how to build defenses in depth, and that we are too gentlemanly to force the civilian population to do it like the enemy does every day. Hence the so-called "breakthroughs" that aren't anything of the sort because there was nothing in front of them and the Soviets were just groping forward into empty space. He had harsh words for the feeble army commanders up front, and compared them with the SS units: Where an army division fled in panic, a single

company of the SS Totenkopf had held the whole line. In fact, only the SS is still worth much in air-force eyes.

That night the British hurled a second major attack at Berlin. This time they lost forty-seven heavy bombers, most of them to Major Herrmann's non-radar-controlled "free lancers." The British were now in serious difficulties. Trying again to wipe out Berlin, they killed 346 people on September 3, but lost 22 more bombers. In the three raids only twenty-seven planes had come within three miles of the aiming point. The miles of craters tailing back across the countryside were vivid evidence of lowering bomber morale. The British called off the attack on Berlin.

Marshal Badoglio announced on September 8, 1943, that he had signed a secret armistice with Eisenhower. Göring was not surprised at all. At the same time the Allies landed at Salerno in southern Italy. Hotly contested by the Luftwaffe, the beachhead became an Allied bloodbath as II Air Corps' rocket-firing fighters raked the landing craft and troops. Richthofen's bombers and torpedo planes damaged an Allied battleship and three cruisers, not to mention the Italian battleship *Roma*—sunk by an Hs 293 missile—and several other Italian warships destroyed by KG 100 as they scurried for the safe haven of British-controlled ports.

That day Hitler told Göring that he had already marched Rommel into northern Italy, while Student was disarming the Italian forces around Rome. By his well-placed mistrust of the Italians Hitler had saved Germany's sizable forces in southern Italy from betrayal to the enemy. On the afternoon of the tenth the Reichsmarschall was among the admiring Nazi leaders who crowded around Hitler as he broadcast to Germany and the world, uttering the grim assurance that "within three months" the Reich would arise anew and go on to final victory.

A few days later the paratroops rescued the imprisoned Fascist leader Mussolini in a daring coup, and flew him to Hitler's headquarters. What little admiration that had remained for the Duce was dispelled as Rommel's troops made astonishing discoveries of strategic materials that the Italians had squirreled secretly away, and as Kesselring uncovered hundreds of brand-new Italian fighter planes. "The Italians and the Duce," Göring lectured Hitler triumphantly, expectorating an anger that had built up over twenty years, "have been carrying on deliberate sabotage for years. They simply hid all these materials and the planes. The Duce was plain dumb. He ought to be shot right now." As Hitler's war conference ended, Göring took Rommel aside. "Act like lightning against the Italians," he advised. "Above all, don't wait until the Duce's back is in office!"

"They had bigger stocks of copper than we do!" shouted Göring to Milch a few days later. "But the most astonishing thing is the fuel oil. Hidden in two tunnels we found enough to keep their entire navy operational for a year!"

The swine tucked it away, barrel upon barrel, and then came whining to me for more. 'We would dearly love to fly, but we haven't the fuel!' I gave them another thousand tons. And now we find they have sixty-five thousand tons tucked away!''*

Vengeful and angry, Hitler ordered Göring to bomb an Italian city like Brindisi or Taranto before the Allies had time to organize air defenses. "We've got to show the Italian public," rasped Göring, passing on Hitler's logic to his generals, "and some of the neutrals and our other indolent allies, that even if you chuck in the sponge you're not out of the war!" Told that Italian Air Force officers, before turning their equipment over to the Germans, had riddled the aircraft engines with machine-gun fire and ripped up the parachutes, Göring ordered the culprits hunted down. "I would have them hanged on the airfield," he said, "and leave the bodies dangling for three days."

Yes, Hermann Göring had loathed the Italians ever since 1924.

"You have no idea," he would tell U.S. General Carl F. Spaatz on May 10, 1945, "what a bad time we had in Italy. If they had only been our enemies instead of our allies, we might have won the war."

"As commander in chief of the air force," said Göring that October, 1943, "people hold me responsible, and rightly so." For a few days that month the war in the air seemed to have taken an uglier turn. Spaatz's bombers attacking the German coastal port of Emden on the second were clearly monitored carrying radar, so they too could bomb through ten-tenths cloud. The Luftwaffe seemed increasingly impotent. By day Galland's fighter squadrons seemed paralyzed by fear. "Göring's fighters have arrived," the people took to saying. "So the raid must be over!" The Luftwaffe sent a mere twenty-two long-range night fighters to harass RAF bases one night. Hitler was infuriated. "I far prefer," he said, telephoning Göring, "to keep bombing their cities, whatever you say."

On October 4, although the skies were sunny and agents had actually told the Germans what the target was—Frankfurt-Heddernheim—Galland's pilots barely intervened. Frankfurt was badly mauled. Hitler phoned Göring derisively at nine-thirty that evening. Göring found out subsequently that the 5th Fighter Division had been "grounded by bad weather." "The German public doesn't care two hoots about your fighter losses," he snapped at Galland. "Go to Frankfurt and ask what impression your fighter losses that day left on them. They'll tell you, 'You're out of your mind—look at our thousands of dead!' " He added, "For the sake of our Luftwaffe prestige, there can't be a second Frankfurt. Perhaps you can take it. I can't!"

Summoned to Hitler's presence the next day and cursed for ninety minutes, Göring showed off the new production program, number 224. It featured the

*Rommel had discovered thirty-eight thousand barrels in the tunnels at La Spezia; the Germans also seized 123 million liters of gasoline.

262 jet for the first time, but Hitler's eagle eye detected what Göring's had not—that bomber production virtually vanished in the spring of 1944 although he was calling for a strike force by May 1944 capable of defeating the expected Allied invasion in the west.

Göring transmitted Hitler's anger vocally to his staff. "I was told I just had to hold tight for a year," he raged, "and then everything would come out right in mid-1944. But that's not true. This month the program shows 410 bombers, and next October only 266. . . . What on earth is the field marshal [Milch] thinking of? I want an end to this swindling, once and for all," he shouted, losing his temper. "This is worse than under Udet. Where's the 'production increase'?" He learned only now that the He 177 would have no rear gun turret at all. Göring suddenly snapped. Face glistening, he ordered the arrest of Udet's erstwhile chief engineer Reidenbach by the Gestapo, along with his "fellow bunglers." "There's to be no court-martial . . . If they're at fault they'll be executed. Just watch—if we announce in a week's time that the former heads of development and planning and the chief of staff of air armament have all been shot—that'll make the whole herd of swine sit up and take notice!" His staff listened in bemused silence. Göring reddened. "The field marshal is always talking about shooting people," he screamed. "When I say it, it will be done without mercy. I am not all mouth!"

Shaken by the increasing daring of the American raids, Göring flew down to the Obersalzberg—although he was now understandably reluctant to commit his valuable person to the unfriendly skies. As his Focke-Wulf 200 droned south for four hours, his colorful imagination came into play as vividly as though he were once again on the battlements of Veldenstein. Now he imagined himself an American air gunner, trapped in a Flying Fortress while hundreds of Nazi fighter planes zeroed in and hammered away relentlessly from every quarter. After an hour he realized that *his ammunition belts were empty*. Around him (in his imaginary scenario) the other guns were jammed or the gunners were dead or dying. By the time his plane landed near the Obersalzberg, he knew how to defeat the Americans: attack and attack and attack. "There's not one squadron that could take that," he told Galland and the generals at his villa on the seventh.

Galland blinked skeptically and lit a cigar.

"How long can you fire—from every buttonhole?" persisted Göring.

"Seven minutes," replied the fighter force commander.

"Right," said Göring, and did the calculation for him. "That means you can make three sorties to engage the enemy during each four-hour raid—if you really wade into them!"

Galland hesitated to commit himself.

"Three times," said Göring flatly. "I insist!"

Thus he became the architect of the Luftwaffe's biggest victory over the American bombers one week later.

For three days, meanwhile, on October 7, 8, and 9, 1943, he held a technical inquisition. His tongue had lost none of its edge. "Our Luftwaffe," he would brood to his generals on the eighth, "is at the bottom of an abyss. It has lost the confidence of the public and the armed forces. . . . The people are saying that our fighters chicken out and trail along behind while the big enemy squadrons fly unmolested over our cities for hours on end in 'Nuremberg party rally' style. Yes, that's the catchphrase now."

Milch defended the fighter pilots. To Göring, however, these youngsters were just "pussyfoots." "They just have to close the enemy to four hundred yards instead of a thousand; they just have to bring down eighty instead of twenty. Then their low spirits will be gone, and I will doff my hat to them. But as for taking potshots at two thousand yards, my attitude is this: *Götz von Berlichingen* [Lick my ass]!"

As he was speaking the next day, October 9, a message was handed in to him. Despite a colossal air battle over northern Germany involving German fighters from all over Central Europe, the American bombers had wrecked 90 percent of the Focke-Wulf assembly plant at Marienburg in East Prussia. "Things can't go on like this much longer," announced Göring. "Orders must go to Minister Speer at once to build six underground factories for fighter planes."

The Americans had lost twenty-eight bombers that day. They took revenge by attacking Münster on October 10, and lost thirty more. At midday on the fourteenth, Göring called a conference of aircraft-industry bosses at Berchtesgaden. They were two acrimonious hours, with Professor Messerschmitt's utopian Me 264 New York bomber high on the agenda. "If only," said Göring wistfully, "we could manage that—dropping a few bombs over there [on the United States] and forcing the blackout on them too!" More rational minds argued, however, that working on the 264 would delay the Me 262 jet, which Hitler had now rediscovered as the cure to all his strategic problems. "I do need that [New York] bomber," agreed Göring with a sigh, "but the fighter is more important."

At that very moment an historic air battle had begun. It was the day that the U.S. Air Force nearly fell out of the sky. Their target was once more the ball-bearing factories at Schweinfurt. Word reached Göring of the drama as he drove back up the lanes to his Obersalzberg villa. As the American escort fighters withdrew, Galland's squadrons closed in, hurling bombs, rockets, machine-gun, and cannon fire at the three hundred heavy bombers. This time, as Göring had ordered, the fighters were landing all over southern Germany to refuel, rearm, and take off again. With big gaps already torn in their tight formations, the lead bombers of the U.S. First Air Division hit Schweinfurt at 2:40 P.M. At 2:57 P.M., 160 German fighters thundered in simultaneously to attack the withdrawing bombers. For only 14 losses that day Galland

would claim to have destroyed 121 of the Americans. Proud and happy at this very real victory, Göring telephoned Hitler at 9:00 P.M.

As bad luck would have it, his rival and enemy Albert Speer was sitting next to Hitler at the precise moment that phone call came through. Putting down his knife and fork, the young minister slipped out to phone one of the ball-bearing factories. The foreman told him that the whole town was devastated. Speer hurried back to report this to Hitler in his own triumphant way. Speer's report at least temporarily diminished the impact of Göring's. In fact, not one tank or plane was lost to the Nazi production in consequence of this raid. The Americans made no further attempt to penetrate deep into the Reich until they obtained proper long-range fighter cover in early 1944.

After Schweinfurt, Göring decided it was safe to go out and tour the ravaged cities of the Rhineland. He had already decided to inspect the fighter, flak, and radar organizations. Surprisingly, wherever his bulletproof limousine halted—whether in Cologne, Wuppertal, Krefeld, or Bochum—he was mobbed by cheering civilians. He took in all the unfamiliar sights of the blitz—people reopening stores amid the rubble; messages chalked on broken walls from relatives seeking next of kin; signboards pointing to shelters; and broad arrows indicating safe escape routes if the whole city should catch fire. True, when Göring appeared, there were ironic shouts of “Call me Meier!” but there were mothers holding out babies to him as well. “I’m human too,” he said a few days later, “and I would have understood it if these people who had just ruins all around them—just rubble to the left and right of them—upon seeing a brass hat go by (and the one responsible for the whole mess at that, or at least responsible for their defense)—might, well, not exactly toss rotten eggs at me, but at least throw the odd scowl or shout ‘You fat old lump!’” He turned to the generals who had witnessed these scenes with him. “You saw how the people all streamed over to me. What a welcome! I could have cried. And in the fifth year of the war at that! That’s when I knew,” he continued, “that provided we, their leaders, don’t perpetrate any really serious blunders, we can’t lose this war!”

In a similarly optimistic vein he addressed bomber pilots of the hard hit KG2 on an air base in Holland. “How he cursed the Dutch,” recalled one listener, radio operator Corporal Schürgers, shot down soon after:

He said, “I noticed this morning as I was driving here through Holland, how the mob of women was loafing around with rucksacks and picnicking in the woods of a Sunday morning, instead of working for a living like any decent German woman. *She* is standing at a lathe right now, while these lazy beggars gallivant around and gape at me as I drive past.”

“Gentlemen,” says he, “I’ll soon put a stop to that. I want all Dutchmen who are too idle to work locked up.”

Up speaks old Sperrle. "Well, Herr Reichsmarschall, that's easier said than done. We've got to show respect—"

"To hell with respect in wartime," says he. "Do you think the Russians would have their own soldiers laboring on an airfield or something? Let's show them who's boss around here!"

"In Holland," continued another NCO, a Dornier observer, "Hermann told us that the evacuees from the Ruhr are coming to Holland. The Dutch will have to live in encampments."

Göring spent the night of October 22–23 at the main fighter-control center at Arnhem. That night's RAF attack unfurled with all the cunning of a poker game—with feints and decoy runs, with the main bomber stream and Mosquitoes darting about Germany tossing out aluminium foil and false flares. As the fighter controller began broadcasting the running commentary, a German émigré began transmitting false directions from Dover countermanding his. Göring intervened several times, warning the pilots, "*Achtung!* Those orders were fake!" An unholy confusion resulted. By midnight the city of Kassel—home of the Fieseler Aircraft Works, where the Luftwaffe flying bomb was being mass-produced, was ablaze. Six thousand citizens would perish in this second fire storm in Germany.

Addressing fighter pilots the next morning in a hangar at Arnhem's Deelen Airbase, Göring angrily accused them of being "leery"—"In fact, a lot of you are *very* leery." He scornfully recalled their boast that they would make a meal of the "four-engine jobs" if they came close. "Well," he said, "they've come close. But so far, no meal!" "Bear one thing in mind: The German public is suffering terribly, day and night, from the enemy bombing terror. By night, they can understand in part, because they realize it isn't all that easy to tackle a bomber in the dark. What they don't grasp is why you can't do it by day—in brilliant weather—and they say so in countless letters to me. After seeing how you fight, they tell me I obviously just recalled *cripples* to take over the air defense. If I now make your losses public, and tell them, 'Wait—we have three airmen dead and eight or even twelve are missing,' they're going to tell me: 'We thought they were soldiers! They know war isn't child's play!'" Glowering at the rows of pilots, Göring thundered, "I can assure you of one thing. I will not have cowards in my air force. I will root them out."

On October 27, 1943, Hitler called a top-level conference on whether or not to pull out of the Crimea. Göring repeated the arguments to his own staff the next day.

GÖRING: In Russia, in the vast outfield that we have won, we can operieren [make tactical withdrawals]. But we must have the firm resolve to have so many troops under arms by a given time—

spring [1944] at the latest—that we can kick the Russians out all over again. Whether the Russians are at Krivoy Rog or one hundred miles closer to us or not—that is not vital.

What is vital is to be able . . . to prevent any second front emerging in the west at the same time.

And this is where our air force is of crucial importance. The Führer made this quite clear yesterday, in the presence of Dönitz. The Führer said, “The jet fighter with bombs will be vital, because at the given moment it will scream at top speed along the [invasion] beaches and hurl its bombs into the massive buildup that is bound to be there.”

I thought to myself, “I don’t know if we’ll have the jets by then.”

He had informed Hitler that he had just run into Messerschmitt at Neuburg Airfield, and that the professor had warned him the Me 262 was running three months late because he needed four thousand more workers. Hitler “almost had a stroke,” said Göring.

Arriving at Messerschmitt’s now-tattered Regensburg factory on November 2, 1943, Milch challenged Göring with what he regarded as the vital question—how the Reich was to be defended in the spring when the Americans began returning with long-range fighter escorts.

“Even if every single German city is razed to the ground,” barked Göring, “the German nation will survive! . . . It lived long before there were cities. Even if we have to live in caves! But if the Bolsheviks pour in, life comes to an end for us.” Resorting to a rhetoric that masked the really prophetic quality of his words, he continued that he saw in fact two cardinal dangers: the first, “When we are told one fine day that the Soviets have Army Group So-And-So in Silesia, and another in East Prussia—that there’s one on the river Vistula and another advancing up the Oder.” The second danger was Britain and her air force, the RAF. “That’s why I still need a bomber force—for defense. I’ve got to be able to bomb them. For two years they haven’t been bombed. But,” he exclaimed, “the moment the British try to land in France and establish their second front, I’m not going to leave a single fighter plane to defend the Reich: That same day everything that can fly will be sent across [to France].”

“If the British once get a foothold on the Continent,” he explained, “that would be fatal for us. If they bomb our cities for those two or three days, that is bad but not fatal.”

THE BLIND LEADING THE BLIND

Göring would admit to the gauleiters in November 1943 that the Luftwaffe could never regain superiority in numbers. The enemy's thousand-bomber raids were now a commonplace. "Just a year ago," wrote Herbert Backe sarcastically afterward, "he was talking of [the Americans] as a race of razor-blade and button manufacturers. It's hair-raising. But," added the Staatssekretär, "he has declared that he will publicly pronounce retribution the moment we can attack the [British] Isles with one hundred planes."

Understandably Göring vested his hopes in the new jet. "I don't want to come up with the 262 half a year too late," he had remarked nervously in mid-October. A modest preproduction series was now planned—one Me 262 in January 1944, eight in February, forty in March, and sixty a month after that. Real mass production would not begin until November 1944.

Displaying the kind of energy that only occasionally spurred him now, the Reichsmarschall toured the jet-aircraft plants in November 1943. At Regensburg, on November 2, Professor Messerschmitt showed him the sixth Me 262 prototype to be built and a new, top-secret rocket-powered interceptor, the Me 163. Overimpressed as usual whenever he saw a new plane,

Göring spoke of attaining supersonic flight, and announced that Hitler wanted the Me 262 primarily for a bomber role against the Allied invasion forces.

"But Herr Reichsmarschall!" beamed the professor, eager to deceive. "We have always provided for two bomb racks in the plane . . . One 500-kilo, or two 250-kilo bombs!"

Göring believed him, and asked how long it would take to install the bomb-release gear.

"Two weeks," answered Messerschmitt without batting an eyelash.

Visiting Dessau on the fourth, Göring inspected the Junkers production lines tooling up for the Jumo 004-B jet engine, and saw the prototype of the near-supersonic swept-wing Ju 287 jet bomber too. His last stop was at Brandenburg, where the Arado Company had now assembled five prototypes of Professor Blume's Arado 234 jet bomber. It had a top speed of 500 mph and a range of a thousand miles. There were plans to manufacture one thousand by mid-1945.

Thus things would look up for the Reich if the war lasted long enough, and Göring no doubt emphasized this when he reported to Hitler on the sixth. Generals Zeitzler and Korten had just briefed Hitler on their respective "re-venge" weapons—the A-4 rocket and the Fi-103 flying bomb. The catapult sites and launching bunkers in France would be completed by mid-December. Hitler began to talk of delivering what he called a "New Year's present" to the British.

At Dessau the Reichsmarschall had advised Junkers to find underground floor space as soon as possible for production. "What has been damaged by fire," he told them, "is beyond repair." Speaking to the assembled gauleiters in Munich on November 8, he asked their help in locating suitable tunnels and caves. He also promised them that the He 177 bomber—in which he had still not lost faith—would one day carry to London six tons of Trialein, an explosive twice as powerful as anything the RAF had developed. "There are, thank God," he added, "lots of extraordinarily important targets along the east coast that we shall tackle first. It is better to wipe out a town of one hundred thousand people entirely by a terror raid, than to make a dent in a giant city."

His fighter planes were now also much more heavily armed than a year earlier, and he was imbuing a spirit of self-sacrifice in the pilots. On the same November 8, Colonel Galland was heard issuing this order, number 2159, to his squadron commanders, creating an elite shock troop within the fighter force: "The Reichsmarschall has ordered the setting up of a *Sturm Staffel* [storm unit]. It is to scatter the enemy bombers using heavily armored fighters in level, close-formation attack, pressed home to point blank range."

The intercepted signal specifically left it to each pilot whether to destroy the enemy by shooting him down at minimum range "or by ramming." "Once initiated, the attack by storm units will," Galland continued, quoting

Göring's order, "be carried right into the heart of the enemy without regard for losses." Galland asked for volunteers—"pilots who are absolutely determined to take their opponent down with them rather than land without a victory."

RAF Bomber Command had promised to win the war by obliterating Berlin. On November 22, 1943, they began their attempt, launching a raid that killed fifteen hundred Berliners, inflicted serious damage on the ministries and factories, and totally wrecked Göring's "pet," his Forschungsamt. On the following morning he invited Korten, Milch, and their bleary-eyed production experts out to Carinhall to discuss routine problems of jet-aircraft production and the shortage of skilled industrial manpower. Milch pleaded with him to draw Hitler's attention to the army's reserves of manpower—the field marshal claimed that of 8.3 million German soldiers now on the eastern front only 260,000 were actually fighting. "Two million soldiers," he insisted, "could be moved into the front line proper in three weeks." But visiting Hitler on the twenty-fourth, Göring was cowed into adopting precisely the opposite line: According to Admiral Dönitz's record, Göring declared himself convinced that a large number of new front-line soldiers could be obtained from the Luftwaffe's rear areas, never mentioning the army's.

That night the RAF returned to Berlin, killing twelve hundred civilians and devastating the Chancellery, the famous Kaiserhof Hotel, and the entire government district. Göring had forbidden the flak to open fire since 193 German fighters were scrambled, but on this occasion the fighters arrived too late to destroy more than a few attackers.

To restore his Luftwaffe's sagging prestige, Göring ordered an impromptu display of its newest equipment for Hitler. He directed his engineers to assemble everything possible—including the Hs 293 and Fritz antishipping missiles, the radars, jets, and the flying bomb at Insterburg airbase, which was a short train journey from the Wolf's Lair—on November 26. With the same recklessness that he kept accusing his engineers of, Göring even ordered prototypes of planes not yet in production to be shown, like the Junkers 388 bombers, an updated Ju 88 powered by two double-row radial BMW 801's. "It doesn't actually have to fly," he had pleaded to them on the twenty-third. "Just so the Führer can see it!"

As a public-relations exercise, the display was a disaster for Göring.

Plucking the program out of Milch's hand, the Reichsmarschall read out the specifications as he conducted Hitler past the rank of parked planes and missiles. Abreast of the stubby, squat Fi-103 flying bomb Hitler asked when it would be ready. Kröger, a Luftwaffe staff engineer from Peenemünde, volunteered, "By the end of March 1944." Hitler's face darkened, and Göring, who knew that Hitler was thinking of New Year's Eve, winced.

At the Me 262 jet fighter, Hitler again paused. "I'm not interested in this plane as a fighter," he commented. "Does it carry bombs?"

Messerschmitt bounded forward, saluted, and announced that the 262 could carry one ton.

Hitler announced, "I order this plane built as a bomber!"

He took only Milch onto the roof of the control tower to watch the 262 fly past. "The Reichsmarschall," he said, "is too fat to get up through the trapdoor."

Göring returned to the hunting lodge at Rominten. At Carinhall, gangs of laborers had completed installing twenty-millimeter flak positions and bunkers across the surrounding Schorf Heath. Scores of soldiers were sweeping the leaves of autumn off the estate's asphalt roads, in case the Reichsmarschall returned. But although he had two well-equipped air-raid shelters at Carinhall—one for family and one for staff—Göring decided to remain in East Prussia, far from the howl of the sirens and the blast of the bombs.

On the night of the Insterburg display the RAF sent 450 planes to Berlin and 178 on a diversionary raid to Stuttgart.

Hitler ordered Göring to exact violent retribution against London. The Reichsmarschall called Koller and Pelz aboard his train and directed them to scrape together every available Ju 188, Ju 88, Me 410, and He 177 for Operation Capricorn—planning to saturate the city's air defenses by sending in first 300 bombers, then 200 of them returning that same night, and 150 more the following morning. Pelz suggested sending the ten He 177's to drop two 2500-kilo bombs each, filled with Trialen, on Parliament.

Göring greedily approved. "Just imagine the effect," he chuckled, "of twenty Bix Maxes thumping down with this super explosive in them!"

On December 3, he issued the formal order for a general new blitz on Britain's industrial centers and ports, and directed that the German bombers were, like the British, to carry 70 percent incendiary loads and the biggest blast bombs available. Leaving written instructions with Field Marshal Milch that the Me 262 was "only to be regarded as a jet *bomber*" as Hitler had ordained, Göring departed for Paris on the sixth, to supervise Capricorn the Blitz on London.

In Paris, surrounded by the familiar cosmopolitan sights and aromas, he reverted to his old haunts and habits. He had been trying for some time to prise out of the Musée de Cluny a fabulous example of German goldsmiths' craft—the Basel altar known as the Antependium of Emperor Otto II. He proposed a swap, acquired title to the three objects offered in exchange, and on December 11, 1943, had the magnificent, ornate Antependium brought around to the Quai d'Orsay. But the French had now grown crafty: They sensed which way the war was turning, and wanted to make a *gift* of it in recognition of the Reichsmarschall's "services in protecting the national treasures." A gift, in their view, could be subsequently recovered. Outsmarted, Göring gave up this particular quest. Deciding to examine the altar anyway, he knelt artlessly down to scrutinize the pedestal's workmanship.

The museum directors chuckled silently at the image of the paunchy, be-medaled Reichsmarschall groveling before their ancient altar.

Capricorn was delayed, first by weather, then by equipment shortages. Wanting to spend Christmas with his family, Göring returned to Carinhall.

The British night raids on Berlin had not diminished. On typical nights high-powered British transmitters flooded the fighter-controller's radio channels with bell sounds and snatches of Adolf Hitler's speeches. On December 16, Hitler instructed Göring to speed up the Me 262 bomber—although Hitler was thinking now less of reprisals than of the coming Allied invasion. "With every month," he confided to his staff two days later still, "the probability grows that we'll get at least one squadron of jet planes. The vital thing is to rain bombs down on the enemy the moment they invade. . . . Even if there's only one plane up, they'll have to take cover and they'll lose hour after hour! Within half a day we'll be bringing up our reserves. Even if they're pinned down on the beach only six or eight hours, you can figure what that'll mean for them."

That Christmas his troops in Italy presented Göring with something of a cuckoo's egg. His aides Brauchitsch, Gritzbach, and Hofer unpacked from sixteen crates at Carinhall some of the rarest art treasures Göring had ever seen—a prebirthday surprise from the paratroops in Italy. Even Göring became uneasy at theft on such a grand scale. His inquiries revealed that the Italians had evacuated 187 such crates from Naples galleries to the mountaintop abbey at Monte Cassino. With the connivance of the new Nazi "Art Protection Commission" in Rome, the Hermann Göring Division had offered to transport them to the Vatican—but only 172 crates would eventually arrive there (on January 4). The contents of the other sixteen now lay spread out for the Reichsmarschall's delectation—lifesize bronze statues of Hermes Resting, a female dancer, an Apollo from Pompeii, two stags from the Herculaneum, antique gold and silver, and a stack of paintings too: two Titians ("Danse" and "Portrait of Lavinia"), a Claude Lorrain landscape, a Raphael, a Tiepolo, a Palma Vecchio, and Pieter Breughel the Elder's famous painting of "The Blind Leading the Blind." His barely used conscience sorely troubled, Göring put them on "temporary" display at Carinhall and asked Hitler for a ruling on this booty. Hitler told him to remove them immediately to the safety of the flak bunker at *Kurfürst*, air-force headquarters outside Berlin.

Ironically it was thus Göring and Hitler who rescued these famous treasures for posterity. American officers afterward solemnly accused the Reichsmarschall of having "stolen" the Monte Cassino treasures. In view of the depredations visited by their strategic bombers upon the historic abbey just a few weeks later, in February 1944, they were, however, in no position to press their point.

* * *

The year 1944 would see the final ruination of Germany's most beautiful cities, but also the beginning of a painful Luftwaffe revival, with the jet-propelled aircraft leading the way. On January 3, 1944, Hitler told Göring that he attached top priority now to the new U-boat types XXI and XXIII, and to these jet planes. "If I get them in time," he reiterated, "I can ward off the invasion." It had become an obsession for him. From Asia that evening, Göring sent a telegram to Milch to ask whether they could scrap even more aircraft types to boost the jet's production. With Heinrich Himmler's help he now planned to put mass-production lines for both the 262 and its Jumo 004 jet engine underground, in a cavernous factory beneath the Harz Mountains. There was no time to be lost: On the seventh, British newspapers revealed that they too were working on jet propulsion.

Göring's fifty-first birthday, a few days later, was a shadow of its predecessors.

Any last vestiges of festive mood were spoiled by a demanding inquiry from Hitler about the heavy Me 410 fighter armed with the fifty-millimeter cannon, one of the planes displayed to him at Insterburg. "Again and again," Göring testily cabled to Milch that day, "the Führer inquires how many of these planes are in operation. Since I unfortunately have to tell the Führer that virtually no such planes are in operation, and that only two or three have been equipped with the cannon, the Führer has begun to look upon such displays in the same light as the famous Rechlin one [of July 1939]."

On January 20, 1944, the RAF dropped twenty-four hundred tons of bombs on Berlin, an extraordinary effort considering the range, and considering the Luftwaffe's difficulties one year earlier in lifting just one hundred tons over the short range to Stalingrad. On the following night Göring launched the much-delayed Operation Capricorn. He believed that three hundred or four hundred bombers had attacked London, but the British mockingly put the number arriving at about thirty. "You've got agents," snorted Hitler at General Korten. "Find out!" Göring fled to Carinhall, preferring the thunder of the raids on Berlin to the hidden tones of menace in Hitler's voice.

That winter the paratroop general Bernard Ramcke came to see the Reichsmarschall in this, his natural habitat. For Ramcke it was an unforgettable experience.

Brauchitsch apologized that Göring was sleeping late after a five-hour dispute with Milch the day before. Upon awakening, Göring had a posse of art dealers to haggle with. It was 7:00 P.M. by the time Ramcke strutted into the lavishly appointed, sixty-foot-long library lined with priceless furniture and precious books. "Lieutenant General Ramcke," he announced, saluting. "Commander of the Second Paratroop Division, reporting fit and at your service." (He had broken an arm.) His steel front teeth glinted in the pink light.

Göring was sitting in a finely crafted armchair reading a red leather-bound book with gold lettering. He rose to his feet, the sleeves of his gold-brocaded robe of green silk plush uncoiling down his arms. Ramcke took note of the silk plush—it looked familiar—and of the lacquered slippers, the golden belt, hem, and tassels, and noticed the well-permed hair and well-oiled rosy features. (“A cloud of the finest Oriental aromas wafted from his outsize cheekbones toward me,” chuckled Ramcke afterward, relating the episode to fellow generals.) “Well, Ramcke,” said Göring, nonchalantly laying aside the book. “How have you been getting on?”

The emeralds in his gold and platinum rings matched the silk robe, noticed Ramcke. As he began chiding Göring for never visiting one of his paratroop units—let alone seeing the men jump—Edda came gamboling in. “Papa, Papa! My pearl necklace broke all over the floor, and look, Papa, I found them all!”

The Reichsmarschall gathered the child up in his arms. “Oh, your lovely necklace!”

He began threading it for her. A kiss was planted on her. “And now one for Papa!”

Ramcke, tiring of the display of domesticity, realized where he had seen the robe’s green silk plush before—on a new lampshade in his own home. Down in Italy Bruno Loerzer’s headquarters had been at Taormina, and the locals had produced textile goods as tourist souvenirs. Ramcke had bought a lampshade, and Göring evidently this robe.

By night the fighter squadrons turned the war in the air Göring’s way, and decisively.

On February 19–20 the RAF dispatched 816 bombers to Leipzig. Schmid’s experts plotted the bomber stream’s radar emissions perfectly. Although the defense radar was again jammed and voice communications swamped by the familiar bell sounds and Hitler speeches, the weather was fine enough to detect the enemy route changes, and 294 German fighters made contact, bringing down 78 of the RAF planes. No bomber force could sustain this loss rate for long.

By day it was a different story. On the morning of February 20, one thousand American bombers opened “Big Week”—the attempt to throttle Göring’s air force once and for all. Over the next five days they set down ten thousand tons of bombs accurately on every important target of Göring’s aircraft industry.

For an instant it appeared that the Luftwaffe was defeated. The week-long offensive left thousands of Göring’s skilled aircraft workers in mass graves and the gutted, useless skeletons of hundreds of half-built planes on wrecked production lines. But Göring gave Field Marshal Milch permission to set up an interministerial, troubleshooting Fighter Staff (*Jägerstab*), and even agreed to allow it to be placed under the control of Karl-Otto Saur, Speer’s loud-

mouthed, dynamic right-hand man. That way, Albert Speer could no longer evade final responsibility for the Reich's air defenses. The Speer ministry rose to the challenge and released the vitally needed raw materials and machine tools; aircraft production began to pick up again.

On February 24, Göring packed his suitcase aboard *Asia* and told his staff he was taking three weeks leave at Veldenstein Castle.

The next day the new fighter staff met for the first time—at Speer's ministry. It was a further significant abdication of power by Göring to his rivals.

IMMINENT DANGER WEST

While the new fighter staff—Milch, Saur, and their principal lieutenants—toured the ravaged aircraft factories in a special train in the days after the fires and carnage of Big Week, Hermann Göring and his “little air staff” relaxed in their Franconian castle at Veldenstein. A seventy-two-hour week was introduced throughout the aircraft industry. Driven—whether by the desire for victory or the thirst for revenge—the men, working often in factory buildings stripped of roofs and windows, achieved a production miracle. Their factory delegates came with Milch and Saur to the castle to report to Göring and his chief of staff Günther Korten on March 4, 1944. Göring passed on to them the word that the Führer was ordering work begun at once on two big bomb-proof aircraft factories. Milch noted maliciously in his pocket diary afterward, “He was lacquering his fingernails!”

That same day the American bombers made their deepest daylight thrust into Germany yet, to targets near Berlin. On the seventh, after they bombed Berlin itself, Hitler assigned top priority to aircraft production—putting Göring’s factories even above those producing the tanks and submarines on which victory must ultimately depend. On the eighth, Milch and Galland stood outside the 1st Fighter Division operations room at Döberitz watching

the glittering procession of hundreds of American bombers high above the capital yet again—"An extraordinary picture with their condensation trails," Milch entered thoughtfully in his pocket notebook.

Despite these raids, morale in Berlin remained high. The Japanese ambassador cabled to Tokyo that he had seen people crowding the streets to watch the spectacle "with scarcely any signs of cringing on their faces." He attributed this "excellent morale" to the Nazi party's prompt relief measures like the "Göring Relief Train" (which distributed the food and black-market luxuries bought by Colonel Veltjens in the occupied west.) The Allies' saturation-bombing raids were in short, producing, an unintended result—people felt that they had no alternative but to fight on to the bitter end.

This trend was reflected in the ascendancy of radicals like Himmler and Bormann. Himmler came to Veldenstein for the afternoon on March 9, to report to the Reichsmarschall on the use of slave labor. He had already supplied thirty-six thousand convicts to Göring, and promised over fifty thousand more for the mass-production lines, as well as one hundred thousand additional convicts to labor on the underground and bunker excavations.

Later that month Hitler arrived in Bavaria. Fearing an increase in Bormann's influence—the Obersalzberg was Bormann's domain—Göring moved from Veldenstein to his villa, to be closer to Hitler's. He did not attend many conferences, however, while Bormann and Himmler rarely missed them. On March 25, Himmler reported to the Führer that eighty RAF airmen had tunneled their way out of a prison camp in Silesia and that millions of man-hours would be wasted in hunting them down. Hitler ordered Himmler to take control of any airmen who were recaptured, and Göring later heard disquieting rumors that they had been shot by the SS for "resisting arrest." "With what were they supposed to have offered resistance?" he indignantly asked an interrogator years later. His only orders at the time were for the commandant, a Colonel von Lindeiner, to be court-martialed for negligence: Stalag Luft III, like other camps, had been equipped with the most sensitive cathode-ray display devices to detect tunneling sounds.

Göring's prestige was in steep decline. After General Gerd von Schwerin reported to Hitler from the Russian front that spring, General Schmudt accompanied him out to his car and laughed out loud at the mention of Göring's name. "Nobody," he said, "takes the Reichsmarschall seriously anymore!"

Göring had quiet hopes of recovering his political authority by defeating the Allied invasion in the west. He had issued his first order to prepare for the invasion on July 23, 1943; further orders had followed on December 6 and 15, followed on February 27, 1944, by the basic directive for defeating what he code-named Imminent Danger West. His fighter forces were now largely concentrated in the Reich; Here, he had eleven squadrons of single-engined and seven of twin-engined day fighters, and twenty-six squadrons

of night fighters. His plan was to reinforce Luftflotte 3, in France, from these squadrons defending the Reich the moment an invasion operation began. While certain units like ZG26, ZG76, and the "bad-weather squadrons" of JG300 and JG301 would remain with Luftflotte Reich, he would rush nineteen fighter squadrons (the entire I Air Corps) to France along with a number of bomber squadrons and reconnaissance flights; eight of the fighter squadrons would be converted there to fighter-bombers and placed under II Air Corps (General Buelowius) as a ground-attack command. That was the plan, and Göring hammered it in with a number of orders that spring. "Invasion, invasion, invasion," one captured Ju 188 pilot was heard whispering to another in April. "You'd better believe it. That is going to be the clincher!" He recited two orders issued by Göring to be read out on the invasion front—one assigning specific altitudes to bomber squadrons for daylight formation attacks on the Allied invasion fleet, and the other saying verbatim: "This invasion *must* be defeated even if there's no German Air Force left at the end of it. . . . What Eisenhower asks of his troops I expect from my Luftwaffe, but more so."

Even before this exhortation, the fanatical Nazi woman aviator Hanna Reitsch had begun dreaming of a suicide force to attack the Allied invasion fleet—"piloted," as she put it under interrogation, "by healthy young men who believe that through their deaths thousands of soldiers and civilians can be saved." She was thinking in terms of one thousand volunteers. She took the project to Hitler on February 28, 1944, at the Berghof. Hitler scoffed at the idea of a kamikaze force. "It is not in keeping with the German character," he told her, but authorized her to develop the plan. Himmler welcomed it as a useful employment for condemned criminals. A suitable explosive chariot was selected—initially Reitsch picked the still-experimental Me 328 flying bomb: The pilot would guide it into the sea just short of the target; its two-thousand-pound warhead would explode beneath the hull. An aviation doctor at Rechlin was asked to investigate how close to suicide man could go and still function logically.

At the top Luftwaffe level Hanna Reitsch found little enthusiasm, however. Korten was lukewarm, and instructed Colonel Heigl of KG200, the special weapons Geschwader, to take the project up. Göring showed no enthusiasm at all for the scheme. "We needed strong leadership," Reitsch later said, criticizing the spirit with which the Reichsmarschall had imbued the Luftwaffe. "Leadership, tempered with an idealism to match our own."

Such thinking was not German exclusively. There was also fanaticism among the stoical British bomber crews, who kept doggedly coming back for more despite punishing losses. A Junkers 88 attacked an RAF heavy bomber over Stuttgart on March 15, raking it from underneath with a long burst from its "sloping music" (*schräge Musik*), a cannon set at an angle in the Junkers' roof. "We pulled up and opened fire," the sergeant-navigator Kugler said ruefully later. "We raked them from stem to stern. . . . They

were dropping and on fire, but their rear gunner still opened fire on us! He was going down in flames, but he killed my radio operator and 'coachman'; missed me, but my plane was on fire and I had to bail out."

Two weeks later, on the night of March 30–31, Göring scored his biggest defense victory of the war. The RAF bombers' night target was Nuremberg. Despite deafening jamming and clever feint operations, the fighters had no difficulty in sighting their prey as the eight hundred bombers scraped condensation trails across the clear moonlit sky, betraying their general position once more by their radar emissions. Schmid fed a total of 246 fighters of the 1st, 2nd, 3rd, and 7th Fighter Divisions into the bomber stream. "From south of Bonn onward," his war diary grimly records, "the bomber stream's route was marked by crashes." The fighters claimed to have destroyed 107 heavy bombers that night; the RAF's own records concede the loss of 94 over Germany, and a dozen more that crashed after limping back to Britain. After this catastrophe the RAF virtually called off their night offensive for six months.

A few hours later Milch was on the phone from Berlin with the March 1944 production figures.

"Tell him I got them already from Saur," said Göring at the Obersalzberg. Despite the crippling losses of Big Week, their factories had manufactured more planes that month than ever before—turning out 1,670 new fighter aircraft and repairing 530 more. It was in its way a victory over the Americans as satisfactory as the one just inflicted on the British.

As April 1944 began, Albert Speer was convalescing—or as some cynics put it, malingering—in the Tyrol. Walking on the mountainside with Speer's forceful deputy Karl-Otto Saur on the seventh, Hitler revealed his production strategy for the coming year. They could reconquer the Soviet Union and win the war only by increasing tank production. "But the prerequisite for that," he said, "is the one hundred percent fulfillment of the air-force program, to clear the skies over Germany this year." He said the same to Göring himself six days later. "I need tanks and assault guns in deadly earnest. But first of all we've got to have a fighter umbrella over the Reich. That is the alpha and the omega of it all."

Hitler considered that Speer had let him down badly. He had begun building a bunker for Me 262 jet production near Landsberg, but progress was slow. Now he told Göring to get on with the job, with or without Speer.

The next day Göring sent for Xavier Dorsch, chief of the Todt Organization that had built the autobahns before the war. Dorsch was on Speer's payroll, and loyally explained that Speer would not allow the OT to operate inside the Reich territories now. However, he did send for his own blueprints for bombproof aircraft factories, and Göring took the civil engineer up to see Hitler that evening. The Führer told them both to go ahead, regardless of what Speer might say. Walking on the seventeenth with Göring, on the

sunny slopes of the Obersalzberg, Hitler told him that he would brook no further delay—he had to have a multistory underground factory to manufacture five hundred 262s per month, working around the clock. “First and foremost,” Hitler explained, wearily spelling it out to the Reichsmarschall yet again, “I’ve got to be able to put a fighter ‘dome’ over anything I can’t get under cover immediately. If I’ve got two thousand fighters on hand in the Reich, then the raids are going to cost the enemy too much . . . This ‘cheese dome’ of fighter planes constantly overhead—that’s our top priority.”

Göring passed this unchallengeable wisdom on two days later to Milch, Korten, Saur, Dorsch, and his own ubiquitous “little air staff.” Blaming Speer for the delays, Göring recalled that he had asked for such a bombproof factory eight months before—“We could have had it long ago already.”

Speer learned of this. From his place of “convalescence” he sent a long, paranoid letter to Hitler accusing everybody of plotting against him. Hitler ignored him, issued a formal decree to Dorsch to get on with the job, and ordered Göring to call a conference of civil engineers—“And do it without Herr Speer,” he said, “so it is tackled with some gusto!”

Words like these were music to Göring’s ears as he fought to maintain position on the slippery power slopes of the Obersalzberg. Fate had so far been exceptionally kind to him. He congratulated himself that the Allied strategic air forces had still not realized the real Achilles’ heel of the Reich—the synthetic-oil plants. “I have heard,” he speculated on April 19, “that the enemy isn’t attacking them because he wants them for his own use. He thinks it’s enough to pulverize our airplanes.”

He was under no illusions about the coming of the Allied invasion. Against the opinion of most of the army generals, he and Hitler agreed that the invasion was likely to hit Normandy or the Cherbourg Peninsula. On April 25, his bombers executed their first attack on the invasion forces assembling at Portsmouth and Southampton. The returning planes reported sighting 264 probable tank-landing craft—enough to lift three divisions—and enough shipping for six more divisions dispersed along the south coast. The Luftwaffe photographs also revealed the prefabricated “Mulberry Harbor” caissons, each 68 meters by 20 meters, identified as “jetties for major landings.” Coverage of the entire British coastline confirmed to Göring that this was the only invasion force. He transferred two of his best divisions, the 91st Airborne and the 5th Paratroop, to the Cherbourg Peninsula.

Another month had passed. Late on April 30, Saur phoned. They had now produced 1,859 new fighter planes and repaired 654. But on May 12, the Luftwaffe’s terminal nightmare began. The Americans suddenly opened an offensive against the Reich’s synthetic-oil refineries. The next day Allied code-breakers heard Göring ordering flak defenses switched from the already denuded Russian front and the aircraft factories at Oschersleben and Wiener Neustadt to the synthetic-oil plants. It was clear proof that the Germans were

giving the defense of their oil a priority "even above the defense of aircraft manufacture," and the British code-breakers remarked upon it.

In the weeks before the invasion Göring was confronted with a moral issue that was to turn up again at his subsequent trial. Individual American fighter planes had begun machine-gunning trains and even civilians in the fields. The public responded with indiscriminate lynchings of crashed Allied airmen. More than one *German* pilot had to fight off peasants wielding pitchforks and shotguns in the resulting confusion. Shouts of "I am a German aviator!" were greeted more often than not with: "So, the *Schweinhund* even speaks German!" Göring had to issue *Deutsche Wehrmacht* brassards to his pilots. The high command deliberated on whether to sanction this lynch-mob justice. Göring wanted the Allied malfeasants dead, but favored the old-fashioned firing squad, preferably held "at once" and "in the locality of the action," as his staff were told on May 15. The problem would be to identify the actual culprits, as he pointed out to Hitler. After this discussion General Korten recorded that Hitler had decided that *in special cases* enemy aviators might be executed on the spot, e.g., for machine-gunning parachuting German airmen or public transport or individual civilians. Göring would later tell historian George Shuster that he had always instructed his officers to adhere to the Geneva Convention.

At one Hitler conference his aide Major Herbert Büchs saw the Reichsmarschall refuse the Führer's angry demand to be given the name of a Luftwaffe officer who had rescued an Allied airman from a lynch mob in Munich. A few weeks later, discussing the problem with Ribbentrop and Himmler, Göring again argued against lynch law, as is plain from his remarks on June 19: "We have to do all we can to stop members of the public acting against enemy airmen *not* involved in such acts. My view is that such acts can always be dealt with by the courts, since these are *murders*, which the enemy has forbidden his aviators to commit." There the matter would rest for the time being.

The respite on the Obersalzberg clearly did him good. But day after day, as Göring waited in his mountain villa for news of the invasion, the U.S. Fifteenth Air Force flew overhead from Italy making its way into Germany, while the U.S. Eighth Air Force flew southward by day from England and the RAF passed overhead by night en route to bomb targets in Hungary and Austria.

May 1944 was almost over, yet still the Allied invasion had not come. Göring, however, was satisfied that he had done all he could to prepare for it. On the twenty-fourth, his pilots procured magnificent photographic cover of Bournemouth, Poole, Portland, and Weymouth: These southwestern English ports were now crammed with invasion craft, confirming once more that Normandy, rather than the area around Calais, was the invasion target.

The Allies were beginning their final push toward Rome. On May 23, Korten brought Richthofen in to report on the Italian theater. "Reichsmarschall," wrote the field marshal later, "was very sensible. Gets the point of everything. Knows most of it, but unable to make decisions without the Führer. . . . Reichsmarschall looking good, and really sensible. . . . Reichsmarschall is optimistic."

The day began with an aircraft production conference held in the SS barracks on the Obersalzberg, chaired by Göring. Richthofen, who attended, was struck by the contrast between the Air Ministry veterans like Milch and the upcoming radicals clustered around the new "fighter-aircraft dictator," Saur. "Milch and his people were still in their old rut," wrote Richthofen in his diary afterward. "I said so to the Reichsmarschall afterward, and he basically agrees and wants changes."

"From the moment that America's entry into this war became inevitable," said Göring, according to the shorthand transcript, "it should have been clear to all of us that one day the enemy's numerical superiority would be colossal." The Allies had produced an armada of heavy bombers with devastating effect. The Germans had none even worth manufacturing now. General Korten warned that if Saur cut production of the remaining bomber types to 284 per month, the air force could not maintain more than twenty-four bomber squadrons. Göring paused, agonized, and left the crucial decision to the afternoon's session with Hitler himself.

It began at 3:00 P.M. As usual, Hitler's famous villa was outlandishly cold. He gazed absently across the valley while Milch began reading out the future aircraft-production figures until the field marshal reached the 262, listed under *fighters*. "I thought that was coming as a bomber!" Hitler barked, interrupting sharply.

The others exchanged uncomfortable glances. Milch had made the decision to build them only as jet fighters, it turned out. "Is there anybody at all," snapped Hitler, "who obeys my orders?" He reminded them that at the Insterburg display he had ordered the 262 built only as a high-speed bomber—with its one ton of armorplate and armament replaced by bomb gear instead.

Milch could not remain silent. "Mein Führer," he exclaimed. "The smallest infant can see that this is a fighter, not a bomber aircraft!"

The next morning Göring confronted his generals—Korten, Koller, and Galland—with this new situation. They all agreed glumly that there was one obvious design problem: the one ton of armorplate was all *forward* of the jet's center of gravity, while any bomb gear would necessarily be *on it*. It was a major redesign that Hitler now called for.

"You gentlemen all seem to be deaf," said Göring. "I have kept repeating the Führer's perfectly clear order, again and again. He doesn't give a hoot for the Me 262 as a fighter. He just wants it initially as a fighter-bomber, a *Jadbomber*."

Asked when the plane could be operational as a bomber, Petersen made a wild guess. "Around three months," he said.

Göring thumped his fist on the table. The invasion was not going to wait for the 262. "You gentlemen dare to do what no civilian would ever dare—quite simply, to disregard orders! The most ill-disciplined bunch in Germany: our Wehrmacht, and our officer corps."

Hitler persisted over the coming weeks that the Me 262 was to be produced purely as a bomber. Perspiration glistening on his brow, Göring swore on his own life to comply. On May 27, 1944, he cabled to his generals, "The Führer has ordered the Me 262 to be operated exclusively as a high-speed bomber. There is until further notice no question of it as a fighter plane." Two days later he told General Galland that "to avoid misunderstandings" he was removing the 262 from Galland's jet-fighter specialist (Colonel Gordon Mac Gollob) and transferring it to Colonel Marienfeld as general of bombers.

Four days after this conference Göring saw Hitler strolling down the hill. He had come to pay his respects to little Edda on her sixth birthday. The child's mother detected a trace of irony in the "Frau Reichsmarschall" with which Hitler addressed her as he kissed her hand.

39 TOTAL SACRIFICE

He would be awakened at nine.”
testified Göring, describing Hitler’s life-style to interrogators.

“read the newspapers, and then sleep some more. Then came the war conference. Ordinarily this lasted for three or four hours, during which he would get terribly excited.” The news that excited Hitler one June 1944 morning was this: At 8:00 A.M. on the sixth, II Air Corps had signaled, “Enemy landed with strong forces between Dieppe and Cherbourg.” It was the long-awaited Allied invasion at last.

Prodding the map unrolled across the marble table in the Berghof, Hitler announced triumphantly to Göring, “They’re landing *here and here*—just where we expected!”

Göring beamed. For eleven months he had planned for this moment. Victory in Normandy would restore the Luftwaffe’s diminished prestige for good. But what he had failed to bargain for was that the high command, befuddled by treason and complacency, would be so undecided that they could not rule during the first twenty-four hours whether this Normandy invasion was real or a feint.

Not until late on the seventh would the high command authorize Göring to start transferring the eight hundred fighter planes from the Reich to France.

Thus, for the air force the invasion battle was virtually lost before it began. Against the 10,585 sorties flown by Allied planes on the sixth, the Luftwaffe could muster only eighty Normandy-based fighter planes. Some units did make a fitful start from Germany. At 2:30 P.M. the first and second fighter squadrons of Jagd Geschwader 1 signaled that they were on their way with thirty-one and thirty-two FW 190's respectively; the third squadron reported, rather less ardently, that it would take off "when the thunderstorm now over the airfield has passed." The example of another unit, the third squadron of JG54, may stand for all the rest: Of twenty-two FW 190's setting out that evening from Cologne, only two arrived at the right destination—Villa-coublay Airfield—and only one was serviceable the next day.

The papers of Karl Koller, Korten's deputy, show that by late on June 8, Buelowius had only five ground-attack planes and ninety-five fighters operational in Normandy. Allied code-breakers heard the Luftwaffe specify the airfields that seven new squadrons were to arrive at; within one hour those airfields were in Allied target dossiers. By the ninth, fifteen fighter squadrons (though still not the nineteen originally promised) had arrived with 475 Me 109's and FW 190's, of which total 290 were serviceable; but their airfields were moonscapes of bomb craters, and their ground organization nonexistent.

Richthofen's diary, however, reveals that optimism initially prevailed on the Obersalzberg. Koller's papers contain the upbeat message that Göring sent congratulating his staff on their brilliant work before the invasion. But the nectar of triumph soured even as it passed his lips. The BBC scoffed that the Germans had been caught with their pants down. Göring himself used a different sartorial metaphor. "The Reichsmarschall," his humorless office signaled all echelons on June 10, 1944, "has established that during enemy operations and the state of emergency men of the Luftwaffe have been sleeping with their clothes off." This signal too, was intercepted and deciphered by the British. This cipher weakness would prove crucial to the thwarting of Göring's anti-invasion operations in Normandy. On the seventh, for example, the British deciphered his orders to three fighter-bomber squadrons thus:

1. Concentrate attack on tank assemblies at Periers-sur-le-Dam. . .
2. Time of attack 17:00 hrs.
3. Fighter cover by simultaneous operation of elements of II Fighter Corps.

As things went awry in France, Göring recalled Hanna Reitsch and her suicide squadron. He found it had made little real progress. Production of the special Me 328 glider-chariot at Gotha was only fitful, so the unit was converting to the Fi 103 flying bomb, modified to include a pilot's cockpit; since several test pilots had been killed, Colonel Heigl of KG200 proposed using souped-

up FW 190 fighter bombers instead: each could carry as much as a 1,800- or 1,400-kilo armor-piercing bomb (since it would not, of course, need any fuel for a return flight). Koller's record for June 9 confirms that Heigl's squadron had thirty-nine volunteers standing by to carry out what was coyly referred to as this "total operation" (*Totaleinsatz*) in fourteen days' time. Himmler, however, intervened to ask Hitler to forbid the premature mission and, on June 18, Koller noted that the Reichsmarschall also wanted "another talk with the Führer" about it. Incongruously, the supposedly life-weary glider pilots were unenthusiastic about converting to the dangerous, death-laden FW 190. When Lieutenant Colonel Werner Baumbach shortly replaced Heigl at KG200, the FW 190 plan was quietly shelved. Writing to Hitler on July 28, Speer would oppose wasting the brave men on the invasion ships—far more profitable, he would argue, to use them against the Soviet power stations instead. The suicide squadron became a hot potato. It was handed back to Hanna Reitsch, then to the scar-faced SS Colonel Otto Skorzeny. They forwarded it to Galland; he passed it to Göring, during a train journey from Rominten to Berlin; and the Reichsmarschall passed the buck to his lethargic crony, the chief of personnel Bruno Loerzer. This was his own sure way of ensuring that nothing got done.

There was an inherent fallacy, but only Galland seems to have spotted it. "I told my men," he recalled a year later, "that if you're going close enough to ram [a bomber] anyway, you can shoot them down *and* have a fifty-fifty chance of coming down alive."

On the first day of the Allied invasion Hitler had ordered Göring to launch the flying-bomb reprisal attack on London. After six days of rushed preparations and a humiliating premature effort ending in fiasco, the pilotless missile attack on London was resumed in earnest on the fifteenth: 244 flying bombs were catapulted and an Me 410 pilot reported huge fires sweeping the British capital. Suddenly Göring was persona grata at the Berghof again.

Within a few weeks these missiles were destroying thirty thousand homes a day in South London. More important, they were diverting a colossal bombing effort away from German cities. In the twelve months up to the end of August 1944, the missile sites would attract 117,964 tons of Allied bombs.

That month the Luftwaffe scored another notable success. Earlier, Koller had requested permission to bring over their small strategic bomber force, IV Air Corps, from the eastern front for mining operations off the invasion beaches. Göring had refused. "Four Air Corps," he had replied on June 18, 1944, "is our last major reserve in the east. We have to bargain for a major [Soviet] offensive in the east." Unexpectedly, it was the Americans who had cause to regret Göring's obstinacy. On June 21, overconfident and careless in anticipation of victory, they sent 114 Flying Fortresses to destroy a

40 days
30,000 / 17,000
30,000
40
17,000,000

synthetic-oil plant at Ruhland, south of Berlin. An He 177 of General von Greim's Luftflotte 6 trailed the American bombers as they continued on to the Ukraine, and from their direction and from captured documents Luftwaffe commanders could predict that the force would be landing at Poltava. Göring ordered IV Air Corps to raid the Poltava Airfield that same night. Two hundred Luftwaffe bombers gate-crashed the Russian welcoming party, blasted them and the boozy Americans with 110 tons of fragmentation bombs, and returned to base in eastern Poland without loss. They left behind raging fires at Poltava as 450,000 gallons of aviation fuel blew up, silhouetting the blazing wrecks of forty-three B-17's and fifteen P-51 Mustangs as well as scores of Russian aircraft. "Those were wonderful times," reminisced Göring to Spaatz when they were all over.

Talking with Koller on June 24, Hitler was astonished to learn that the four-engined version of the He 177 would not appear in squadron service until 1946. But he was not shattered by the news. "What counts in our present situation," he said two days later still, "is to turn out fighters and still more fighters. Plus high-speed bombers. We've got to have that air umbrella over our home base and infantry, even if this means doing without a strategic air force for years."

His own sense of vertigo increasing with each slip in his prestige, Göring now told his generals that it was the "will of the Führer" that no more bombers be manufactured—even if it meant the end of minelaying and IV Air Corps. Anybody disobeying him, he threatened, would be swiftly expedited to the Land of the Dead.

On the eastern front, Army Group Center now collapsed. Again treachery had played its part. The air on the Obersalzberg was vibrant with insult and intrigue. On June 24, Colonel Helmuth Stieff, one of the anti-Hitler plotters, witnessed Göring loudly cursing General Zeitzler and accusing the army of cowardice. The army hit back. When Hitler asked General Heinz Guderian's chief of staff on the twenty-eighth if he had noticed any Luftwaffe presence in France, the colonel replied that yes, he had once seen two fighter planes between Paris and Chartres.

A vicious circle was setting in. Fuel stocks were vanishing. New engines could not be test-run, pilots could not be trained, refineries could not be protected. With the repeated destruction of the refineries in Romania, Hungary, and Germany, the Luftwaffe's fuel supplies had slumped from a barely adequate 175,000 tons in April to only 35,000 tons in July. A signal intercepted on July 9 would show Göring ordering even the pettiest economies in fuel.

There is evidence that he now gave up France for lost. He ordered his art treasures there swiftly evacuated to the Reich, including the seven-ton marble copy of the winged goddess Nike of Samothrace—the air staff's last birthday gift to him. ("As the chief sculptor has had a bad nervous breakdown after an air raid," Dr. Bunjes had written from Paris on July 7, "I shan't be able

to send him to Germany for another three weeks to assemble the parts. This sculptor can then also retouch the Diana as the Reichsmarschall desires.") Rommel's troops were still containing the Allied beachhead in Normandy, but Göring did not expect them to do so much longer. In mid-July he had an urgent consignment shipped from France, including forty crates of "porcelain and liquors" for himself and Loerzer.

Strategically speaking, Hitler too had seen the truth but was drawing more positive conclusions. "Everything depends on our fighter program now," Hitler explained to Korten and Koller, revealing his interim strategic thinking. "We must keep this program strictly secret and conserve our strength meanwhile. The enemy will be astonished when the balance of air power begins to tilt against them four months from now."

With the Red Army now pouring through Poland toward the German frontiers, Hitler demonstratively returned to East Prussia on July 14, 1944. Soon, the Russian spearheads were only forty miles from Rominten.

Göring opted for Carinhall. Here, he received visitors in plain clothes—if plain is the word for silk pantaloons, red slippers, diamond-studded belt, green silk shirt, and violet-hued stockings that were an ill match for his peroxided hair and seemingly rouged cheeks. This chameleon existence was shattered a few days later, July 20. It was a stifling morning in East Prussia. The windows were open at the Wolf's Lair, where Göring, not far from Hitler's bunker, was grumpily discussing with Colonel Friedrich Kless, Greim's chief of staff, the reasons that Luftflotte 6 still felt unable to send its few He 177's to bomb Soviet power stations as far away as the Urals. "Our private discussion took place," Kless now recalls, "in a very heated atmosphere. Suddenly an alarm was telephoned to Göring. An attempt had been made on Hitler's life a few hundred yards away." The call came from Hitler's adjutant. Colonel von Below's voice sounded odd and shaken. He shouted that a bomb had gone off under the Führer's conference table—the Führer was alive, but the Luftwaffe generals Bodenschatz and Korten were both injured (the latter fatally, as it turned out). After going with Hitler to the local railroad station to meet Mussolini, whom he could not abide, Göring went over to the bomb-shattered conference hut. He marveled how Hitler could have survived the blast that ripped the heavy oaken table apart. "Today," he would tell his men the next day, "I believe more than ever that an Almighty Providence will favor us with victory."

A kind of euphoria anesthetized both Göring and Hitler. He heard Hitler assure Mussolini that fighter production would soon top five thousand, and that twelve hundred of the "new jet fighters" were going to mop up the enemy in Normandy. Their less euphoric henchmen spent the afternoon bitching and backbiting. "I am still foreign minister," Ribbentrop was heard to snap at the Reichsmarschall, who flourished his heavy baton in mock menace at him, "and my name is *von* Ribbentrop!"

Some of the instigators of the attempt to kill the Führer, notably the army's

ex-chief of staff General Ludwig Beck, whom Göring had always regarded as a wimpish "drawing-room general," were shot by firing squad that same evening. "The whole creeping poison," the Reichsmarschall told his men afterward, "has come from this generals' clique, and I am convinced that with the elimination of these [flabby pricks] a roar of approval will go through the ranks of the entire Wehrmacht." The subsequent blood purge went further than Göring felt obligatory, however. "Just as in the Röhm putsch," he told historian Shuster, "more people were shot than necessary."

In a secret speech to air-staff officers some months later he called the assassination attempt "the greatest catastrophe we have ever suffered."

GÖRING: Ignoring for the moment every other consequence, just let me mention one, gentlemen: In what light has the world until now viewed the Prussian officer? And how will he be seen henceforth?

If in South America this *caballero* liquidates that *camarilla* and two months later vice versa, then they do it with drawn pistols and aplomb—with a lot of gunplay. . . . Even among these gentlemen there is some honor and chivalry. Not even in South America is it the custom for a comrade to tuck a bomb under his boss's feet.

The army plotters had intended to win over the air force *after* getting rid of Hitler. Despite their failure to kill him, late on July 20, they did make a lame approach to Stumpff's Luftflotte Reich at Berlin-Wannsee. But by that time Göring had already issued a signal to all inspectorates, Geschwader, squadrons, and flights reading (as the British code-breakers deciphered it): "All Luftwaffe units in Reich territory are subordinated to Colonel General Stumpff. Orders of army regional commands (*Wehrkreiscommandos*) are not to be obeyed."

Göring refused to allow Himmler to investigate any possible Luftwaffe involvement. "No officer of my Luftwaffe," he flatly declared, "would have a hand in such a thing." The only air-force officer involved, in fact, was Lieutenant Colonel Caesar von Hofacker, but he was attached to the army's general staff in Paris. Hofacker had initiated the air force's inspector of reconnaissance, General von Barsewisch, into the broader conspiracy; and Barsewisch had thereupon tipped off General Guderian; and Guderian had thereupon tactfully stayed away from the Wolf's Lair until the dust literally settled. According both to Gestapo chief investigator Georg Kiessel and to Rudolf Diels, the Reichsmarschall's misfit "half-brother," Herbert Göring, had actually attended plotting sessions with Carl Goerdeler, the conspiracy's civilian head; and of course, as history now knows, Göring's former Prussian finance minister Johannes Popitz was in it up to his neck.

It certainly seems incredible that Göring's Forschungsamt, which had

moved by now to Breslau, had remained unaware of the conspiratorial ferment, given the plot's vast ramifications. ("Who would have thought," commented Heydrich's father-in-law in a letter, "that an entire clique of generals right next to the Führer could have practiced treachery unobserved!") Was Göring's absence from the hut more than fortuitous? "When I saw the room yesterday in which the contemptible assassination was attempted," he said, "I marveled that any man came out alive. The lethal device exploded violently barely a yard from the Führer . . . yet by a miracle the Führer was unscathed. By chance I was not present myself, but arrived half an hour later." However, Göring certainly had been present at the Hitler conference five days earlier when the same plotters had first hoped to set off their bomb. Nor had they at any time seriously considered recruiting him. Even his friend Count von Helldorf, the turncoat police president of Berlin, had dismissed the idea as ludicrous. "It was hoped at one time to include Göring," recalled Helldorf's son two weeks later, in British captivity, "but my father, after several visits to Carinhall, was opposed to this on the grounds that there was no evidence that he [Göring] would be sympathetic to the plotters and that in any event his physical condition—the consequence of addiction to drugs—would make him a doubtful asset."

The Reichsmarschall was fortunate enough to figure only on their hit lists. In their draft press communiqué, which the Gestapo seized from a hotel safe, Goerdeler had written, "The completely corrupt Göring—the 'Reichsmarschall' who can't grovel deep enough to his so-called 'Führer'—has the impertinence to tell us that the structure and responsibilities of the general staff are all wrong. . . ."

Thus he escaped both bomb and purge. However it would not have escaped Göring's attention that when Hitler broadcast to the world late on the twentieth, to prove he had survived, he invited Grand Admiral Karl Dönitz to speak next, *before* the Reichsmarschall.

For reasons of power politics Göring decided that the division bearing his name, the Hermann Göring Division, must become the savior of East Prussia. He had recalled it from Italy, and it was now assigned to defend the Rominten Heath. In a fighting speech on July 21, 1944, to his Escort Regiment—its elite unit—he made plain his belief that a blessed Providence had intervened to save Hitler. He assured them that the new bazooka (*Panzerfaust*) issued to them made each man superior to a Russian tank. "You should see what a rabble the Russian infantry is!" he encouraged them. "For brave men even tanks hold no fears, because now a staunch man can defend himself even at close quarters against tanks." But he also said, "Any soldier who throws away his arms, even a pistol, in order to retreat faster, puts himself beyond the pale of honor and obligation: each and every one of you, whether NCO or soldier, has the duty to shoot cowards like that on the spot."

GÖRING: Just as the British and Americans in Italy now speak of your division with awe, the Russians must learn to fear you too. . . . Comrades, you must make this pledge: You may give ground in Russia—that is not decisive—but never in Germany. Not one German woman or German child must fall into their bestial hands. And if fate should be against us, if the Russians should come into this province, then that must only be possible when no soldiers of the Hermann Göring Division are left alive.

The total subservience of this superstitious, God-fearing man to Hitler had been reborn by the bomb blast. On the following day one of Hitler's stenographers wrote in his diary:

Before today's midday conference the Reichsmarschall addressed a brief speech to the Führer and proposed that as a visible token of the Wehrmacht's gratitude for his miraculous escape the Hitler salute be introduced immediately throughout the armed forces. The Führer signed this document, whereupon all those present spontaneously saluted.

It was Goebbels, not Göring, whom Hitler now appointed his plenipotentiary for total war. On the train back to Berlin the little propaganda minister poured out his heart about their enfeebled Reichsmarschall to bomber ace Werner Baumbach. Baumbach decided to join forces in the campaign against Göring.

Mortified by Hitler's new snub to him, the Reichsmarschall withdrew from the Wolf's Lair to Rominten, and for the next five weeks he would ignore every hint that he should return.

At first his "illness" appears to have been just a pretext. He was not too ill to receive Herbert Backe for lunch at Rominten one day (although he did introduce Ondarza to the Staatssekretär as "the doctor who is treating me"). They went for a coach ride through the sunlit woods, and Backe told him he was finished with Reichminister Darré. "The Führer," Göring warned him, "won't let a minister go while there's a war on."

This was Göring's protection too. Hitler might show gross disrespect for him, referring to him behind his back as "what's his name," but he would be loath to let him go. Powerful bonds of party history still linked their destinies.

After Korten's painful death, the appointment of a successor showed neither Göring nor Loerzer in a favorable light. Karl Koller, the stubborn Bavarian general now running the Luftwaffe from Goldap, was the obvious man to take over as chief of air staff. On July 24, however, Göring summoned instead the mild-mannered and academic chief of flying training Lieutenant

General Werner Kreipe from Berlin to Rominten. There followed what Kreipe called in his personal diary a "long monologue about the bad situation."

Göring [asked] was I aware that Korten had wanted *me* to take over as chief of air staff from October 1?

I said I was, and touched upon Koller—he was, after all, my superior at Luftflotte 3, and he's going to feel hurt if he's passed over. . . . Göring said he can't get on with the Bavarian.

Lunched with him and Loerzer, then strolled with Loerzer who . . . made some spiteful comments about Milch. Back to Reichsmarschall, who's running a temperature and swallowing pills the whole time.

Göring appointed Kreipe and told him to rebuild the fighter force, establish "blitz-bomber" squadrons in Normandy, and expand the paratroop force. Kreipe was a puzzling choice. He had all the general-staff qualities that both Hitler and Göring detested. Knowing nothing, and caring even less, about Nazi Germany's coming world monopoly in jet-aircraft operations and in surface- and air-to-air missiles, the general was a dyed-in-the-wool pessimist. That evening Kreipe lugubriously moaned to a friend, Göring's former war diarist Werner Beumelburg, that the best they could hope for was to stave off defeat until December, and that Germany could never regain air supremacy even over a reduced Reich bounded by the Rhine and Vistula rivers.

Since Göring hesitated to introduce Kreipe to Hitler for several weeks, the luckless General Koller continued to officiate at the Wolf's Lair. The Reichsmarschall emerged briefly for Korten's funeral at the Battle of Tannenberg Monument on July 28, then vanished again. "Göring," wrote Kreipe, "delivers a very fine eulogy. Koller gives me the cold shoulder. Göring crumples at the end and flies home sick to Carinhall." Hurt and mistrustful, Koller misinterpreted the sudden exit. "The Reichsmarschall didn't talk to me," he noted angrily in his own papers, "although I am still acting chief, and need several decisions from him."

On the last day of the month, now confined to bed, Göring again received General Kreipe:

Göring has an abscess in his throat and can't speak. He whispers to Brauchitsch, who repeats everything out loud to me (odd situation). I'm to go to East Prussia and start work at once. When I ask if Koller's been notified, he says no. . . . Göring hands me a note saying he wants to introduce me to Führer himself as soon as he's better. Until then I am to let Koller or Christian deputize for me at Führer conferences.

"The present state of play," wrote Koller that same day, disgusted with what was happening, "is that L [Loerzer] and RM [the Reichsmarschall] are at Carinhall, while I am holding the fort at Goldap and directing the Luftwaffe alone with a skeleton staff. RM can't be spoken to—is ill—mustn't be disturbed."

In four days, it seemed likely, the Russians might well be in East Prussia, so at Rominten elite troops of the Escort Regiment prepared to torch Göring's beloved hunting lodge. The headstone of Jeschonnek's grave was removed and buried. On August 4, Koller moved *Robinson*, the Luftwaffe's forward headquarters, to an open stretch of railroad at Bartenstein.

The eastern onslaught was held off, but now the western front suddenly collapsed as Rommel's ring of armor around the beachhead was pierced at Avranches.

Göring's staff still declared him sick. When Carin's young nephew Count Carl Gustav von Rosen flew in from Stockholm, he was not even allowed to phone Göring, let alone see him. Mystified, the Swede told his friends that the Reichsmarschall must be under house arrest. This was not so: not yet, at least. At the Wolf's Lair his enemies were still biding their time.

WITCH HUNT

By the late summer of 1944 Hermann Göring's air force was in worsening disarray. In August 1944, British code-breakers intercepted Luftwaffe orders limiting reconnaissance operations over Egypt and Cyprus to one flight per month; banning courier flights over the Reich during morning hours because of Allied fighter harassment, and forbidding ground crews to leave fuel in parked planes "to avoid losses."

As his star sank toward the horizon, Göring's circle of friends shrank. He remained loyal to Philipp Bouhler, who was himself in semidisgrace, and considered appointing him or even Bruno Loerzer to replace Milch, whom he had dismissed in June, as Staatssekretär; but Hitler flatly rejected them both as unsuitable. Fritz Sauckel was the only gauleiter toward whom Göring still felt any warmth. Friendship with Göring was no longer enough to avoid Gestapo arrest. Franz Neuhausen was arrested for misappropriating labor and transport to build a private estate near Belgrade and for smuggling foreign currency into Hungary and gold into Switzerland; Göring managed to secure his release but could not prevent his being exiled. Martin Bormann gathered evidence against Luftwaffe generals wherever he could. Party officials whis-

pered scandalous allegations about General von Pohl, Göring's representative in Italy, and Pohl's female dietician; Party officials alleged too that his officers spent hours swimming or sunbathing with their secretaries.

In France Göring's ground troops fought well—the badly mauled 16th Luftwaffe Field Division made a heroic defense of northern Caën, while the 88's emplaced by III Flak Corps did a lot to halt General Bernard Montgomery's advance at Falaise. But even at that murderous climax in France, Göring was more concerned about extricating his last treasures to safety. On August 13, he ordered Alfred Rosenberg to evacuate all the works of art from the Nazi repositories in Paris and ship them back to the Reich "without delay."

The collapse in France was utter and complete. Luftwaffe officers, taking their cue from Göring, loaded trucks with fancy women, chaises longues, and other booty, and headed for the German frontier, stampeding into the Reich past disenchanted party officials, women, and children slaving to dig antitank defenses. As Göring's troops poured into Germany, the people said that the WL prefix on Luftwaffe number plates stood for "We're Leaving!" Hundreds of brand-new radar sets fell into American hands in Paris.

Himmler and Bormann reported all this to their Führer. Weeping with rage, Göring pleaded with Hitler to let him deal with the sinners. He began telephoning his chief judge advocate to demand, "I want death sentences! Where are they!" He realized it was hypocrisy and hated it. "So long as we were winning," he would remark ironically a few weeks later, "nobody got worked up if our units took over the finest châteaux in France or caroused or womanized. But now the times are rougher, everybody's glaring at us. . . . Yes, when we were winning, people told me straight out I ought to fly whorehouses out to the men."

While Pohl in Italy and the Luftwaffe in France brazenly used precious truck transport and gasoline to loot and pillage, Allied code-breakers could hear II Fighter Corps in France advising its squadrons to "get hold of horse-drawn vehicles" if they could; and in Germany, since each Me 262 used up 200 liters of J-2 fuel taxiing for five minutes, the squadrons were forced to use oxen to pull the jet planes around the airfields to save fuel.

Sensing his powers of intercession waning, in August 1944 Göring speeded up the escape of his remaining Jewish business friends. A year before, in The Hague, the Gestapo had detained art dealer Kurt Walter Bachstitz, a Jew. Bachstitz had the good fortune to be married to Walter Hofer's (non-Jewish) sister. Hofer wrote to SS Brigadeführer Harster, the Gestapo chief in Holland, "The Reichsmarschall wants Bachstitz permitted to emigrate, and the case held over until I report to him on the matter." Göring instructed that the case be dropped. "Bachstitz," he ruled, "is to be left alone." In September 1943 the dealer divorced his wife and transferred his property to her, thereby protecting it from seizure. And now, on August 14, 1944, he

was escorted by Göring's private detective to Basel, Switzerland, leaving behind, of course, valuable paintings to express his gratitude to Hermann Göring.

In the Reichsmarschall's absence Koller had continued to sweat out Hitler's tantrums at the Wolf's Lair. "At every conference the Führer rants on for hours about the Luftwaffe," Koller wrote on August 8, 1944, in a shorthand note that verged on the hysterical. "He levels the meanest accusations about our meager aircraft figures, our technical blunders, our noncompletion of the replenishment squadrons in the Reich, the Me 262, and so on. The Führer says that he is given figures that turn out to be wrong. How can I know what the Reichsmarschall and General Korten were telling him—how can I help the mistakes made from 1939 to 1942!"

Since Göring was still acting "sick," Kreipe attended his first Hitler conference on August 11. "The Führer has become very stooped," he observed in his diary. "Cotton wool in his ears. He trembles violently, you can only shake hands with him gently." Hitler blamed the air-force "collapse" on Udet, Jeschonnek, and Milch. They had made premature promises on which he had based fateful strategic decisions. He asked Kreipe to ensure that "truth and clarity" once more supervened.

Significantly, Kreipe paid courtesy visits to Himmler and Bormann before returning to Bartenstein.

Bormann continued to load Göring's dossier with telegrams from party officials substantiating the Reichsmarschall's ineptitude and laziness. "Everybody curses the air force," recorded Kreipe unhappily on the fifteenth. "The Führer orders the gauleiters' reports investigated."

On the next day Kreipe noted that the Reichsmarschall was "still acting sick," and went to see him at Carinhall three mornings later. They haggled for four hours. Lunching with Bouhler and Körner that day, Kreipe found the Reichsmarschall more approachable—Emmy's feminine charm was keeping up his morale. "Hermann must take better care of himself," she chided the general.

Hitler did not agree. "How much longer." he asked Kreipe on the twentieth, "is Göring's illness likely to last?"

The fighting evacuation of France continued, but the Me 262 was still not ready for combat. "Boundless reproaches against the air force," wrote Kreipe after Hitler's conference on August 22, 1944. The next day Hitler apologized to him. "It wasn't you I was getting at!" he said, unconsciously repeating almost verbatim his remarks to Jeschonnek the year before.

Four evenings later Hermann Göring, wheezing and pale-faced, ventured back into the Wolf's Lair. He reemerged smugly after three hours. Hitler, he said, had not even raised the subject of the Me 262.

Kreipe was not so fortunate when he asked Hitler on the thirtieth to lift

the veto on the Me 262 as a fighter. After ten minutes the Führer shouted him down. "None of you," he snapped, "has the faintest idea how to use the Me 262. I forbid any further discussion of it."

The next evening Kreipe phoned Göring to report that France had now caved in. The strategic effects would be disastrous. The Luftwaffe would forfeit its radar outfield, while the enemy would obtain bases for beam transmitters for precision-bombing raids on synthetic-rubber plants and the smaller towns like Bonn. But everybody blamed the Luftwaffe. "The general grumbling about Göring's setup," wrote Martin Bormann privately, "is attaining quite unparliamentary forms of expression." On September 3, word reached the Reichsmarschall that Hitler was again complaining about his prolonged absence, and threatening to wind up the air force altogether.

Göring hurried over on the fifth, and Kreipe, who went with him, wrote this record of their joint confrontation with Hitler:

Just abuse of the Luftwaffe—it does nothing, it has gone down over the years, he has been constantly deceived over both production and performance figures. Total failure in France, the ground organization and signals troops just took to their heels . . . instead of joining the army in battle.

Then back to discussion of Me 262 operations. Same old arguments . . . Then, in modified form, he developed his idea of manufacturing no more planes apart from the Me 262 and tripling the Flak artillery.

"Sat for a long time afterward with Göring," the general's diary continued, "who purred with contentment, congratulated me, and said we'd killed off the idea of dissolving the air force."

Hanging around the air-staff headquarters, Göring tired easily: He was tired of this war, in fact, but not yet tired of life itself. Once his personal assistant Fritz Görnert ventured to remark, "Herr Reichsmarschall—it ought to be possible to make Adolf Hitler disappear. Not liquidate him, just spirit him away to the Zugspitze Mountain and lock him away. Then a big state funeral, and Hitler is 'dead!'"

Göring changed the subject.

On September 16 he learned from Kreipe that Hitler was devising an extraordinary counteroffensive against the British and American armies "from out of the Ardennes." "In bad weather," Hitler had said pointedly, "the enemy air force won't be flying *either*!" He intended to punch three armies through the weakest part of the Allied line and seize Antwerp. He would thus "Dunkirk" the British Army for a second time; Roosevelt would be defeated in the election; Germany would have won the war. His target date for this was November 1, 1944.

It was perhaps foolish for Göring now to have left the Wolf's Lair for his

own domains at Carinhall, because it gave his rivals a clear field of fire. Hitler even regarded the Battle of Arnhem that began on September 17 as a major Luftwaffe defeat, although Göring had operated 650 planes against the Allied armadas of troop transports and gliders both that day and the next, shooting down hundreds of them.

"New reports about fresh landings in Holland," noted Kreipe after Hitler's conference on the eighteenth.

Führer rages about Luftwaffe's failure. Wants immediate information which fighter forces were scrambled in Holland. Führer violently abuses me. . . . Says the air force is incompetent, cowardly, and letting him down. He has further reports of air-force units streaming back across the Rhine. . . .

I ask for concrete details.

Führer replies, "I refuse to talk with you further. I want to speak to the Reichsmarschall tomorrow. No doubt you are capable of arranging that?"

Kreipe had by now shifted the air-staff headquarters to the rear, a forest location at Rosengarten in East Prussia. When Göring now arrived here at *Robinson VII*, Kreipe warned him that the witch hunt was against *him*, the Reichsmarschall, alone. Göring just laughed.

The laughter faded after they went over together to the Wolf's Lair on the nineteenth. The mood was icy, and Hitler asked to see Göring alone. He instructed him to disband the air staff and its academy and get rid of Kreipe—a scheming, cold-blooded general staff officer, "defeatist and unreliable."

When Göring emerged hours later, "broken up and dismayed," Kreipe challenged him. "Now do you believe me? The whole vendetta is against *you*."

"The Führer," Göring retorted stiffly, "has again expressed complete confidence in me."

Told of Hitler's *Diktat* about the air staff, Kreipe shrewdly rejoined that this would give great comfort to the Allies, since dissolving the general staff had been one of the original dictates of Versailles. Back at Rosengarten that night Kreipe was notified formally by SS Gruppenführer Hermann Fegelein that he was not to set foot in the Wolf's Lair ever again.

Fegelein, Himmler's liaison officer to Hitler, had married Eva Braun's sister, Gretl; his influence was rising. "Together with Fegelein," Göring would growl to interrogators, "Bormann kept dishing up to Hitler the most unfortunate reports about the air force. Bormann naturally saw them as a magnificent opportunity to incite the Führer against me." The dossier kept by the indefatigable Bormann posed a real threat. "Never once," Göring would tell a Soviet interrogator, "not even at the height of my powers, did I have the influence that Bormann enjoyed in those last years. We called him the Little Secretary, the Big Intriguer—and the Filthy Swine!"

Göring knew that the man Hitler secretly hankered after to be the head of his air force was General von Greim—the oldest living fighter pilot, the first airman ever to take him up in a plane. He had sent for Greim after Arnhem, and the general arrived, on September 21, at Rosengarten where he was intercepted by an order from Hitler to go straight over to see him first. At the Wolf's Lair the Führer lectured the Luftflotte 6 commander on Göring's manifold "sins" and offered him the post of "deputy commander in chief."

Swallowing this fresh humiliation, Göring asked Greim to draw up proposals, but found his anger hard to suppress. "Greim," recalled Hanna Reitsch, the general's mistress, "met with a terrific outburst from him."

Like Kreipe's in July, Greim's first act now was to discuss his future position with Himmler, Bormann, and Fegelein.

The growing estrangement from Göring tore at Hitler's physical well-being, already fragile from his bomb-blast injuries. Stricken with jaundice and bedridden for two weeks, he blamed it on his anger at the Reichsmarschall, and began to press for courts-martial of Luftwaffe officers. Göring hastened to comply. On September 22, Luftflotte 3 was heard signaling, "The Reichsmarschall . . . has empowered Luftflotte Reich to set up instant courts-martial to try offenders on the spot, and where cowardice is proved to shoot them in front of the assembled personnel."

The possibility of delivering a fighter grand slam was drawing closer. Hermann Göring summoned squadron commanders to Luftflotte Reich headquarters and promised, "From now on things are going to be different." He revealed that large numbers of fighter planes were becoming available. Luftflotte Reich commander General Stumpff rendered what Kreipe—still acting as chief of air staff—cynically terms in his diary "a Byzantine pledge of loyalty." It was swiftly rewarded when Göring donated a house to him that same day. Kreipe—who had to make do with a more humble silver-framed photograph of Göring—came out to Carinhall on October 3:

Von Greim had seen the Reichsmarschall before me. Göring was seething. Afterward, I was called in alone. Göring was completely shattered, said people were trying to get rid of him, Greim was a traitor. Says he is and will remain commander in chief. For him, Greim is finished. He's to return to his Luftflotte at once.

Kreipe reiterated his warning that the whole witch hunt was directed against the Reichsmarschall.

The Red Army now began its final assault on East Prussia. Hitler demonstratively remained at the Wolf's Lair not far from the battle zone. He was confident that if Nazi Germany could only hold on, the new submarines, missiles, tanks, and jet planes would arrive in time to restore supremacy. Swift and invulnerable, the Ar 234 jet was effortlessly photographing the Allied supply beaches and battlefields in the west. And now the much-

vaunted, much-criticized jet-bomber squadrons were screaming into action against the Allies too. Operated by KG51, the first Me 262 jet bombers were punishing their troop concentrations around Nijmegen. In relaxation of Hitler's rigid veto, an experimental jet-fighter squadron with the first fifty Me 262 jet fighters would begin operations in mid-October from bases at Achmer and Hesepe. Altogether Göring now had around thirty-seven hundred fighter planes, but all these operations were severely curtailed by dwindling fuel, deficient training, and lowering morale.

Nowhere was morale lower than in the much-maligned air staff. On October 9, Brauchitsch brought to Carinhall a gloomy memorandum that General Kreipe had written on "Air Warfare in 1945," morbidly depicting a Reich hopelessly encircled by superior air forces. Göring sent for Kreipe on the twelfth and tossed the document on to the table. "It's defeatist!" he screamed. "It smacks of slide rule and general staff. I'm sorely disappointed in you. Now you too are stabbing me in the back! You've lost faith in victory. Aren't you aware that the Führer has forbidden the general staff ever to assess our overall situation? If I didn't hold you in such esteem I'd have to show this drivel to the Führer, and that would be the end of you."

He tore the paper in two, and threw the halves across the table. Kreipe's usefulness had come to an end, but whom could the Reichsmarschall now appoint as chief of air staff?

Still squirming at the name of Koller, he sent for General Kurt Pflugbeil, commanding Luftflotte 1 on the Baltic coast. Pflugbeil was untainted by general-staff training. Even so, he turned down the job.

Kreipe suggested the name of General Meister. "Meister," growled Göring, "is the same type as you. I don't intend getting any more black marks from the Führer."

With Göring's fighter defenses hamstrung by fuel shortages, the RAF now joined in the daylight raiding. On October 14, while one thousand American heavies attended to Cologne, a thousand more RAF bombers attacked Duisburg (and the same number returned to Duisburg that night). Confronted now with further "disgraceful failures" by air-force units on the ground, Göring announced that "in headlong flight, cowardly individuals—sometimes even entire units—have turned over undamaged weapons to the enemy." He again reminded every soldier of his duty to apprehend such cowards. "Executions," he ordered, dropping a broad hint, "do not require prior authorization from me."

It was a sorry departure from the avuncular and compassionate Hermann Göring who had ruthlessly carpeted generals like Richthofen and Reichenau in 1940 for arbitrary use of their powers of life and death over their men.

On October 16, 1944, the Third White Russian Front attacked East Prussia—a gigantic force of thirty-five rifle divisions and two armored corps. The province was defended by nine German divisions and a brigade of

cavalry. Göring returned to East Prussia and turned up at Rosengarten wearing the clay-brown uniform of the "Hermann Göring" Panzer Corps, which was to defend this region. He ventured briefly over to the Wolf's Lair—now very much the domain of Bormann and Himmler—that day, then went hunting on Rominten Heath for one last time. Afterward, he signed some documents that General Kreipe brought over. "Very friendly reception," observed the latter after a stroll with the Reichsmarschall. "He commiserates with me, remarks for the first time that he now intends to stay on here permanently—he has to keep an eye on what Himmler and Bormann are up to. Himmler, he says, has just asked for air squadrons for the SS!"

Göring feared Himmler more than Bormann now. He knew that if Hitler died, Bormann would probably try to arrest him before he could be sworn in as legal successor; he intended to grab Bormann first and put him on trial. With Himmler, however, he would have to tread more softly. "I couldn't just have him liquidated," he reflected later to George Shuster. "He had the whole police force under him (while Bormann just drew on the Führer's authority). I would have had to undermine Himmler's position bit by bit."

On October 22, the first battle for East Prussia had been won—a significant German victory. The Hermann Göring Corps had counterattacked and thrown the Russians out of Gumbinnen and Goldap. There was terrible evidence of the Russian presence everywhere. Kreipe himself saw the scenes at Nemendorf and recorded in his diary afterward, "Women shot and children nailed to barndoor." He ordered photographs taken for posterity.

On the twenty-third, Göring attended Hitler's conference, then went forward past long columns of panic-stricken East Prussians fleeing westward. Göring accompanied a regimental commander whose men were engaging Russian tanks at Trakehnen.

Still dissatisfied with his fighter-squadron commanders, he harangued them for three hours at Luftflotte Reich headquarters on the twenty-sixth. One FW 190 pilot recalled later that much of what he said was true, "But the rot [of doubt] had already set in." He adopted an unfortunate tone, mingling truculent remarks about the fighter pilots' "cowardice" with bluster: "If you don't shoot down five hundred B-17's the next time," he said, "you're all transferring to the infantry!" At one stage he dramatically ripped his medals off and slammed them down, declaring that he would put them on again only when his pilots starting shooting down planes. "That really nettled Galland," said one Heinkel pilot. "They *all* took off their Knight's Crosses then." Much of the sermon was vintage Göring—he forbade any aviator to abort a mission because of defective "water thermometers" or "speedometers." Adding insult to injury, he also ordered excerpts of his speech broadcast by loudspeaker at every fighter airfield.

Göring returned to East Prussia after that, fearing Bormann's vendetta more than Stalin's military rabble.

Hitler had meanwhile sent yet again for General von Greim. Torn between

sentiment and pragmatism, he once more abandoned the idea of dispossessing the Reichsmarschall, however. "I think that Hitler still felt too close to Göring from the years of struggle," his air-force adjutant von Below said afterward. Bormann, thwarted once again, poured out his irritation in a letter on the last day of October. "People refer," he wrote, "to the constant failure of the Luftwaffe high command ever since Stalingrad and North Africa."

A few days later Kreipe's tenure of office was over. In a farewell conversation with him on November 2, Göring candidly referred to the general's somber memorandum, and advised him never again to commit such dark thoughts to paper. "I am sure," he prophesied, "that there is going to be a 'Nibelungen' struggle, but we shall fight it out—on the Vistula, on the Oder, and on the Wesel." Since these latter rivers were in the heart of Germany, it was not a joyous prospect.

Kreipe pleaded with him to persuade Hitler to revert to diplomacy.

After a long silence Göring responded, "That I cannot do, because then the Führer would lose faith in himself." "Since 1938," he added, taking both of Kreipe's hands in his in a parting gesture, "I have felt that the Führer does not discuss everything with me. Ribbentrop's appointment [on February 4, 1938] took me by surprise, and I have been excluded from several important political decisions since then."

Even as Hermann Göring, his broad chest still voluntarily shorn of medals, was coming under assault at the Wolf's Lair, the resurgent German fighter force was spreading profound alarm among the Western Allies. On October 21, 1944, General Carl F. Spaatz, commander of the strategic air forces in Europe, warned General Omar Bradley that maintaining air supremacy was going to cost the lives of at least forty thousand more Allied airmen. "Our daylight bombing is going to become very expensive." On November 2, nearly 700 of his bombers escorted by 750 fighter planes attacked the Leuna synthetic-oil plant. General Galland raised a record seven hundred fighter sorties against them, and the new Me 262's shot down three bombers without loss.

Ultimately Hitler overruled Göring and forced him to appoint Karl Koller as chief of air staff. For five hours Göring wrangled with the Bavarian general on November 5. After their third meeting that day Koller entered this account in his shorthand diary:

RM describes his entire life, his work, and achievements in rebuilding the German Air Force. Spoke in utter dejection about the campaign being waged against him from every side—the army, SS, and party. Says he is fed up to the back teeth and the war situation doesn't interest him anymore; wishes he were dead. He'd join the paratroop army and fight with them in the front line but the Führer won't let him go, has told him that only he can rebuild the air force yet again.

Koller reminded him of the insults he had heaped on the air staff; but he took the job, under the proviso that he could speak his mind. "Reichsmarschall said that of course I could, and took my hands in both of his, beaming with happiness." "How long will this last?" noted Koller in a wise afterthought.

Two days after that, Göring was visiting Bodenschatz at the flak bunker hospital in Berlin. To Reichsminister Walter Darré, lying in a neighboring bed, Göring looked oddly naked without his medals, but "very well and self-satisfied" nonetheless. "You should have seen him eight weeks ago," the nurses told Darré. "Pale as death he looked then. We thought he wasn't going to last more than a few weeks."

Through party channels still more criticism reached Hitler—this time from Lieutenant Colonel von Klosinski, the party's NSFO (indoctrination officer) in the air force. Göring seethed, but asked Klosinski to Carinhall and invited him to take charge of purging the air force of its superannuated generals and colonels.

Klosinski balked at the job. "Herr Reichsmarschall," he lectured Göring. "You shut yourself away here at Carinhall. . . . You must get rid of the more unsavory officers of your entourage, like Brauchitsch and Loerzer." "Before Dunkirk," the colonel continued remorselessly, "I myself once heard you say Bruno is my laziest general!"

"I need somebody I can drink a bottle of cognac with in the evenings," said Göring truculently.

To the chagrin of Galland and the fighter force he now invited Pelz, the former bomber commander, to move into Carinhall with him. On November 10, he asked Pelz to take the chair at a "Luftwaffe Parliament" held at Berlin's Gatow Air Staff Academy with thirty or more top-scoring fighter and bomber aces. Göring told them that Hitler had commanded him to rebuild the air force; and their job was to comment and advise without fear or favor on whatever topic they liked, except, naturally, his own illustrious person and the Me 262. The meeting broke up in chaos as the feuding bomber officers like Pelz, Herrmann, and Baumbach tore into the fighter commanders Schmid, Trautloft, and Galland; and all of them rounded savagely on the Nazi fanatics like Klosinski, Staub, and Gollob.

Baumbach reported to Göring at Carinhall, and handed over the shorthand transcript. Asked about personnel changes, Baumbach said that they all felt that Loerzer, Brauchitsch, and Dising should go. Brauchitsch heard this and bristled. Göring soothed his ruffled feelings by decorating him with the Air Leader's Gold Medal with Diamonds immediately afterward.

With unbridled hypocrisy Göring issued on November 10 an order severely criticizing Luftwaffe commanders in east and west. "Fortresses have been abandoned without order, troops abandoned without cause," he began. Then, as though his own frantic salvaging of works of art from Paris were forgotten, he continued, "Private goods have been brought to safety, air-force dumps destroyed in panic." He added, "I have already pronounced exemplary

Seem?

punishments." A few days later RAF Lancaster bombers capsized the German Navy's last great battleship, *Tirpitz*, in Norway. The Luftwaffe could do nothing to prevent it.

On that same day, however, Galland reported a huge force of fighter planes now standing by with both fuel and crews for the first grand-slam attack on the next clear day that the entire American bomber force invaded central Germany. Three thousand fighter planes would operate, and five hundred would take off for a second sortie to grapple with any surviving bombers on their return. He promised to destroy five hundred of the enemy bombers in the ensuing battle as the Reichsmarschall had demanded.

Hitler, however, was now minded to execute a grand slam of his own, the Ardennes Offensive. On November 20, he left East Prussia for the last time, abandoning the bombproof bunkers, security compounds, and minefields of the Wolf's Lair, and returned to Berlin. Here, Bormann secretly reopened his Göring dossier.

ZERO HOUR FOR HERMANN

Reichsmarschall Göring now again commanded a fighter force to be reckoned with. Occasionally the fighters had gone aloft—on November 26, General Galland had sent up 550 planes, destroying 25 American bombers over Hanover—but then Hitler ordered a halt. “Suddenly,” recalled Göring a few months later, “the order came from the Führer that I was to use this air force for the offensive, rotating its front to north-south.”

The “offensive” was to be Hitler’s supreme, final gamble in the Ardennes. The thunderous launch of what became known as the Rundstedt Offensive at dawn on December 16 took the Allies by surprise, while the bad weather gave Göring local air supremacy over the battlefield for the first time. He had committed twenty-four hundred planes to this historic battle, and strutted proudly back into Hitler’s forward headquarters, the Eagle’s Nest, able to look the other commanders in the eye for the first time in months. For a week he had no reason to dodge the war conferences. He was his Führer’s *enfant gâté*. For six days the record even shows Göring invited to tea with the Führer. But then the skies cleared, the enemy air forces came out again, and Göring hurried back to his family at Carinhall.

Like a true Christmas-card setting, the romantic Swedish-style mansion

there was canopied in foot-thick snow, with a thin frozen mist drifting in and out of the surrounding conifers. The forest's surviving bison, stags, and reindeer grazed quietly, cocking their ears from time to time at the unfamiliar rumble coming from the east. Emmy greeted her returning warrior husband warmly. Baskets of presents stood ready, locked in the large hall, to distribute to staff and friends—Loerzer, Körner, Bouhler, and now Pelz were still in residence—and Hermann Göring had never been parsimonious with his wealth. Two furniture vans had arrived, bringing the household contents of Rominten Lodge, and Emmy distributed the furniture among her bombed-out friends of the Prussian State Theater. She too was a Christmas person. Every Yuletide she listed one thousand needy families for Hermann to send money to, and sat down with her sister Else and Heli Bouhler packing toys and writing cards to put in each gift parcel.

Not many soldiers could enjoy Christmas of 1944 with their families like this. After a flying visit back to Hitler's headquarters on December 25, just to inquire how the Ardennes fighting was going, Göring returned to Carinhall for the rest of his self-granted leave. The cloying odor of self-indulgence and corruption would cling to Carinhall until the end.

Seeking a new scapegoat for the failure of the air defenses, Göring had picked on General Galland, the colorful general of fighters, and began to freeze him out of his staff conferences. He made insulting remarks in the young general's absence; adopting a turn of phrase oddly reminiscent of his own controversial record in World War I, he spoke of generals who had "lied for each other's medals." By this time Galland's following among the lower ranks had dwindled. "That Galland," muttered one corporal after entering British captivity in February 1945, "is perfumed like a whore. I last saw him in November [1944]. . . . He may have been a good fighter-pilot, but you've got to have some talent for organization and technical ability too. He used to show up wearing boots, a general's stripes, and knickerbockers: a real sight." Officers had more time for Galland, but higher up still his life-style had caused offense to Göring and the prudish Hitler. Even Allied interrogators would find his moral precepts peculiar—Galland had ordered his pilots not to marry, and himself lived with several women simultaneously, explaining that he "had to set an example to his men."

Galland in turn had little time for the Reichsmarschall. He had refused to pander to him—which was a mistake—and his eyes had been opened by Göring's sizable black-market operations in the west. Before returning to the Eagle's Nest, the Reichsmarschall ordered him to Carinhall and informed him, in the course of a two-hour monologue, that he was to be dismissed for employing the "wrong fighter tactics" and for insubordination. Until a successor could be found, he would be sent on leave.

His tail now between his legs, Galland drove back to Berlin. His dismissal was barely noticed, coinciding as it did with Göring's most spectacular operation yet—Operation Bodenplatte, the Luftwaffe's mass attack on the

Scene

Allied air forces. Speculating on the chance of catching the enemy aviators with their pants down, Göring had authorized a swoop on their airbases in the Low Countries at first light on New Year's Day 1945. Reconnaissance planes had brought back tempting photographs of their quarry—for example, of 149 P-47 fighters and 8 heavy bombers neatly parked at Saint Trond in Belgium, literally begging to be attacked. Göring brought in every available pilot, including instructors, pupils, and even veteran Geschwader commanders like Major Michalski, who would personally lead the fifty-five Me 109-G14's and FW 190-A8's of his Jagdgeschwader 4, and Lieutenant Colonel Herbert Ihlefeld of JG1.

Again the code-breakers did not realize what Göring was up to—even though at 6:30 P.M. on New Year's Eve his 3rd Fighter Division had been heard forecasting fine weather at zero hour and at 11:30 P.M. instructing the four Geschwader of fighter planes, "Zero hour for Hermann 0820 hrs."

At 9:15 A.M.—with zero hour delayed an hour by ground fog—Bodenplatte began, with the hundreds of FW 190's and Me 109's suddenly screaming across the Allied lines, firing rockets and cannon, and bombing every targeted airfield simultaneously. It was a more spectacular triumph than Poltava. The devastation caused, particularly to the British-occupied airfields in Belgium, was colossal though never officially admitted at the time. Göring claimed to have used twenty-three hundred planes, which may well have been true. Photographic reconnaissance planes brought back pictures of nine of the many airfields targeted, showing on these alone 389 Allied warplanes definitely destroyed and 117 damaged. But as the day wore on, it became clear that his own fighters had taken an unexpected hammering. "What we did not allow for," said Göring later, not without a degree of perverse pride, "was the intense concentration of [Allied] anti-aircraft guns set up against our V-1 [flying bombs]." Probably two-thirds of his own losses of about 227 planes were caused by his own trigger-happy flak gunners. (The German naval flak in Holland alone admitted having shot down twenty German fighter planes.) Both Göring and Koller defended the operation at Hitler's main conference, commenting that at least it had given his fighter crews a chance to take off. But Hitler forbade any repetition—he wanted the air battles to be in German skies, where his revenge-hungry public could see them.

Göring attended every conference at the Eagle's Nest until January 10, but they were increasingly joyless occasions. As Hitler's Ardennes gamble faltered and finally failed, his attitude toward Göring congealed to ice. With evident malice Martin Bormann wrote in his diary on the fifth, "Reichsmarschall summoned to the Führer on account of the air-war situation." Attending these conferences, Field Marshal Gerd von Rundstedt noticed that Hitler allowed him to sit, but always obliged the Reichsmarschall to stand.

"Things got so crazy," confessed Göring to American historian Shuster, "that I said to myself: Let's hope it's all over quickly so I can get out of this lunatic asylum." He barricaded himself in his special train, read cheap

detective novels—sometimes devouring the same pulp book three times over—and smoked his favorite cigars, very slowly. “Three quarters of my shattered nerves are due—not to the war,” he shouted to Bodenschatz, deaf ever since the bomb blast, “but to the Führer! I’ve been under massive attack for a whole year now.” On January 11, having served his penance long enough, he fled the Eagle’s Nest and returned to the uxorious comforts of Carinhall.

Indignant at the Bodenplatte casualties, and egged on by Koller and Greim, three fighter aces formed a deputation, with Oak Leaves-holder Günther Lützow at their head, to protest to the Reichsmarschall his exclusion of Galland. Göring listened soberly, then summoned all the Geschwader commanders to the sumptuous Aviators’ Building in Berlin. Lützow again headed the deputation; he had tabulated their complaints, which included the undue influence of former bomber commanders like Pelz and Herrmann, the misuse of the Me 262, the Reichsmarschall’s slurs on his fighter pilots, and his humiliation of Galland. Göring, his knuckles turning white with anger, shouted that this was a “mutiny without parallel in history,” and threatened them all with the firing squad. Two days later he pronounced the banishment of Lützow to Italy; Galland was placed under house arrest, forbidden to return to Berlin.

*emulating
der Führer*

Göring spent his last wartime birthday skulking at Carinhall, surrounded by his camarilla, and entertaining at luncheon the few remaining Axis attachés still accredited to Berlin. The Japanese attaché’s report to Tokyo portrays a Göring in a chastened, introspective mood, candidly admitting that he himself had believed that for large enemy bomber formations to operate over Germany for any length of time was “a complete impossibility.”

Without appreciating it yet, however, he was already regaining air supremacy for Germany. A week earlier, on January 5, 1945, the U.S. Air Force generals Carl F. Spaatz and Jimmy Doolittle had frankly warned Eisenhower that they were going to have to attack the jet-fighter production very soon. They estimated that ten thousand tons of well-aimed bombs might set the Me 262 back by three months. Eisenhower agreed, and on this very day, January 12, Spaatz issued a new directive establishing the German jet aircraft as the “principal objective for attack.” If Hitler could prolong the war beyond the summer, Spaatz warned, he would have “jets of such superior performance and such numbers as to challenge our aerial supremacy over not only Germany but all of Western Europe.”

The Soviet winter offensive that began that same day was going to be hard to stop. To halt the masses of tanks and infantry, Göring transferred twenty squadrons of single-engined fighters from the Reich defenses. Hitler left the Eagle’s Nest and returned to Berlin. Göring showed his face only briefly in the Chancellery, then hurried back to Carinhall. As the Russian tank columns plowed on, literally flattening the refugee columns into the bloodstained

snows, Göring found something of his old ruthlessness. On January 16, he announced a string of death sentences against junior officers and NCOs: for bolting under enemy mortar fire, for abandoning a flak battery, for putting on plain clothes and hiding with the French, for swapping gasoline for liquor. He ordered the Luftwaffe's General Waber shot for using military trucks in the Balkans, as Göring announced with well-simulated indignation, to transport "extraordinary quantities" of consumer goods back to Bavaria and Breslau: forty-one thousand cigarettes, a thousand bottles of champagne and spirits, and sixty kilograms of coffee had been found in Waber's houses there. "From one private house in Serbia he stole valuable works of art," Göring's announcement continued, itemizing: "A watercolor, a carpet, and two vases."

Over the next days it seemed that nothing would halt the Soviet invasion before Berlin. At night he heard the windows rattling to the gunfire and rumble of the tank engines. "Emmy," he said, padding into her bedroom, "there's nothing left between us and the Russians." Had the Nazis held on to the West Wall and the Vistula line, a compromise might have been possible—but not now. "People still won't see," his personal detectives heard him exclaim, "that we've lost the war!"

Hitler, however, believed that after the summer the new jets and U-boats would change the whole picture. Bormann and other fanatics backed him, and so did Grand Admiral Dönitz and Himmler. Göring now reluctantly agreed to give Galland's vacant office to Colonel Gordon Mac Gollob. ("I don't know him myself," said Hitler, "but the Reichsführer SS speaks highly of him.") That Göring was not behind Gollob's appointment was plain from the cold language of his Reichsmarschall Order of January 23, commending the new man to the Luftwaffe. "What matters," he suggested, "is neither the organization nor the man, only the aim that is common to us all—regaining mastery of Germany's air space."

Under house arrest in the Harz Mountains General Galland learned that the increasingly influential Colonel Gollob was building up a dossier on him—on his private use of Luftwaffe cars, his gambling, and his philandering. Galland lost his nerve as his private staff were called in for questioning about his alleged defeatism and disloyalty, and he talked of shooting himself like Udet and Jeschonnek. Acting through Hitler's adjutant von Below, Milch and Speer forced the Gestapo to drop the witch hunt to avoid yet another suicide scandal. Milch threatened to reveal to the Führer what he knew against Göring. "Just one percent of it," the stocky field marshal assured Colonel von Below, "will suffice to bring him a court-martial!"

The solution that Göring hereupon devised for the Galland problem was an uncharacteristically neat one: He summoned the general once more to Carinhall, ordered him to form an elite fighter squadron using only Me 262 jets, and to take the other "mutineers" like Steinhoff with him. In effect, given the crushing American daylight-fighter supremacy, Göring was making

these fighter aces walk the plank. Galland's appointment to command this esoteric jet-fighter squadron, Jagdverband 44, was entered in the Luftwaffe war diary early in February 1945.

The evacuation of Silesia was almost over. Shortly these ancient, blood-soaked marchlands would become part of Poland. Asked by Hitler on January 27 about rumors that the British and American airmen held at the Sagan camp were going to be abandoned to the advancing Soviet Army, Göring heatedly blamed Himmler for his lack of foresight and pointed out, "They'll be getting ten thousand aviators." He suggested loading the prisoners aboard cattle trucks if need be. "Take off their pants and boots so they can't escape in the snow."

"Shoot them if they try to escape," added Hitler, approvingly.

Ten million refugees were now stampeding westward before the Russians across field and farm and frozen sea and waterway. The River Oder, last line of defense before Berlin, was still iced over. Some enemy tanks did get across, and on the night of January 29, one Russian monster clanked past Carinhall. The next afternoon Göring told all the women and children to leave Carinhall for the south. They mustered in the foggy, frosty courtyard. He lifted Edda and kissed her good-bye. Emmy arranged for her friends to join the Göring train west of Berlin and carried them down to Bavaria as well. Göring telephoned the Obersalzberg all day long until she picked up the phone and confirmed that they had arrived safely at the villa—still a peacetime idyll with warm baths and servants.

There was one unwanted family problem at this time. Heinrich Müller, chief of the Gestapo, had ordered Albert Göring's arrest for still more anti-Nazi misdemeanors. Invited in 1944 to a dinner in Bucharest with the ambassador Manfred Killinger, he had refused to "sit down with a murderer" (Killinger was the assassin of Socialist leader Walther von Rathenau). More recently, Albert had provided funds for Viennese Jews who had emigrated to Trieste. ("If you want to give money to Jews," the Reichsmarschall had lectured his younger brother, "that's your own affair. But be more careful—you're causing me endless difficulties.") Now he had to lean on the Gestapo again. "This is absolutely the last time I can help you," he told Albert after his release.

The jokes about Göring now had a more vinegary flavor. As one ancient German city after another paid the price of Göring's defeat, the British heard one captured Panzer Regiment's colonel wisecracking to his comrades that Göring was known as "Tengelmann," like the big chain store—"one in every city." Few of those cities had escaped destruction. The Reich capital itself, though scarred by thousand-bomber raids, was still alive and functioning, but Hitler held his conferences in the Chancellery's bunker—a sub-

terranean labyrinth of tunnels and cramped cells, lavishly carpeted and walled with priceless paintings rescued from above-ground galleries.

Here, on February 2, 1945, he ordered Göring to move 123 heavy flak batteries from the cities into an antitank line along the frozen Oder: Holding the Russians here was more vital now than defending the ruins of ancient cities.

The next morning nine hundred American bombers launched a "terror raid" on Berlin. Huge new holes gaped in the Chancellery's façade. "During this morning's heavy raid on Berlin," recorded the Luftwaffe war diary, "the Reichsmarschall asks the chief of operations [General Christian] why not one of our own fighters was scrambled." The answer was that every available fighter was out counterattacking the Russians on the Oder. Göring decided to go out there too. With Emmy and the child gone, something of the old soldier stirred in his blood. After a hot bath and breakfast he now took to driving the sixty miles out to the front line and speaking with Skorzeny and the other officers defending the Frankfurt-on-Oder bridgehead. To this huntsman and forest spirit, the freezing plains were a welcome relief from the fetid, airless atmosphere of Hitler's bunker. ("He [Hitler] would scream about the uselessness of the Luftwaffe with such contempt and viciousness," recalled Göring later, "that I actually went red and squirmed. I preferred to go to the front to avoid these scenes.") Once, or so he would later claim, his car came under fire; and another time, sensing himself outflanked in the darkness by Russian tanks, Göring palmed a lethal cyanide capsule that Philipp Bouhler had obtained for him. The press ignored Göring's front-line visits, while those made by Admiral Dönitz were widely acclaimed. Hitler sneered at what he called Göring's "ridiculous excursions." "He ordered me to attend his war conferences," recalled Göring, "as though to say, 'Stand there and take it, damn you!'"

By February 6, his air force had emplaced 327 heavy flak batteries along the eastern front. Evidently none too sanguine about the battle's outcome, on the seventh the Reichsmarschall quietly called in Walter Hofer and chief architect Hetzelt to discuss evacuating the Carinhall treasures to Veldenstein—where to distribute the various items around the structure of this Franconian castle, and what modifications would be necessary to house the sculptures, paintings, tapestries, and furniture in its towers, tunnels, keeps, and stables.

The Russians launched a dangerous attack from their bridgehead at Steinau on the Oder. That day, February 8, Göring was—briefly—glimpsed down in Hitler's bunker with Field Marshal von Richthofen, now retired and terminally ill. That day too the American bombers were wrecking his synthetic-oil plant at Pölitz. With stocks of only six thousand tons of aviation fuel left, the air force would get only four hundred more tons in February. Inevitably, flying operations virtually halted.

Each time the Reichsmarschall eased his bulk into Hitler's bunker wearing the familiar uniform of soft, pearl-gray cloth, the diehard Nazis swooned with rage. Goebbels protested to Hitler. "Medal-jangling asses and vain, perfumed dandies don't belong in the high command," he wrote. "They must be eliminated."

Hitler agreed. "I am glad," he remarked, "that his wife at least has moved down to the Obersalzberg. She was the rotten influence on him."

Göring gloomily wrote his last will and testament on February 12, and drove in to Berlin for the afternoon conference. A thaw was breaking up the ice along the Oder, so the immediate danger there was lessening. But his fighter defenses were virtually immobilized by the lack of fuel.

Late on the thirteenth, radar reported enemy bombers penetrating deep into Germany behind a screen of electronic jamming. The night's real target was Dresden, Germany's "Florence of the Elbe."

One of Europe's most beautiful historic cities, Dresden had no air-raid shelters, and its streets were crowded with a million refugees from the east when the first three hundred RAF heavy bombers unloaded their fire bombs at 10:15 P.M. Three hours later, with the city's heart already a raging inferno visible 200 miles away, 529 more Lancaster bombers completed the destruction. Dresden, reported the Luftwaffe war diary, was "critically damaged, its inner city virtually destroyed, with immense casualties." On the following midday, the record book continued, twelve hundred American bombers attacked with "grave terror effect." Dresden had been engulfed during the night by a fire storm. The horrific scenes were without parallel in history—far worse than in Hamburg, Kassel, or Berlin. All telegraph lines were down, and British code-breakers heard Heinrich Himmler radioing to SS Obergruppenführer Ludolf von Alvensleben, the Dresden police chief, a message that showed how little Berlin was aware of the true horror. "I have received your report. The attacks were obviously very severe, yet every first air raid always gives the impression that the town has been completely destroyed. Take all necessary steps at once. . . . All the best." Göring, sensing disaster, sent Bodenschatz to report. The general returned to Carinhall ashen-faced, with word that fifty-one thousand dead had already been counted in Dresden. The death toll of that night's massacre would rise to over one hundred thousand.

As troops began to cremate Dresden's air-raid victims on makeshift pyres, five hundred at a time, Hitler swore revenge. His scientists had perfected the nerve gases sarin and sabun, which would have penetrated any Allied gas mask. Hitherto he had forbidden their use, as violating the Geneva Convention. Now he pondered whether it was not time to fight dirty too. Goebbels cackled approval, but Göring, Ribbentrop, and Dönitz were united in opposing any such late departure from the conventions and rules of war.

For Göring the setbacks now came thick and fast. One February morning French men and women agents were loaded aboard one of the Luftwaffe's

→ Emma loves
his finery.

(Two beautiful
women
together.)

Wonder
whether
Hitler
will do
him in.

two remaining captured B-17's in the high-security enclosure of Stuttgart's Echterdingen Airbase. Two billion French francs were stowed in the khaki-colored Flying Fortress with them. Their mission—the sabotage of France's entire economy. At ten-thirty all other flying operations were halted—"on orders from the Reichsmarschall"—while the plane took off, its obligatory tiny swastika barely visible on its tailplane. At three hundred feet the plane exploded. "One of those idiot bitches blew herself up," said a Heinkel pilot who witnessed the drama. "Eighteen dead! The next day the place was crawling with generals. . . . Hermann was furious. He got one hell of a cigar from the Führer for that one!"

Bad luck completed the disaster that poor security had begun. On March 2, the Luftwaffe lost its only other B-17: The plane had managed to set down its cargo and nine agents behind Allied lines. As it returned, an Allied night fighter shot it down, mistaking it for a German FW 200.

On the day after this incident Goebbels urged Hitler to replace the Reichsmarschall. Hitler had to reply that the air force had not produced one suitable successor. He also refused to force Göring to appoint an efficient Staatssekretär—"He'd freeze him out the moment he was appointed," Hitler said. "The Reichsmarschall can't abide strong personalities around him!"

Listening to the guns along the Oder, Göring dreamed that even now Hitler might stand down and allow him, the Reichsmarschall, to steer Germany into a negotiated peace. He admitted to Görnert that this seemed unlikely, but he cautiously ventilated the subject of a deal to Hitler. "Frederick the Great," Hitler admonished him, "never struck bargains." He related to Goebbels on the eleventh that Göring had recommended they generate what he called "a new atmosphere" toward the enemy. "I told him," said Hitler, "he'd do better to occupy himself with generating a new atmosphere in the air." He could see the Reichsmarschall was completely shattered by his retort. "I just couldn't take it any longer," admitted Göring four months later. "I finally worked myself up into a state of nerves."

Hitler instructed him to lay the wreath at that year's Heroes Memorial Day. This was probably how he planned to employ Göring in the future—as a figurehead once more, while real men ran the war in the air. He engaged Himmler's ruthless engineer chief, SS Gruppenführer Hans Kammler, to take over the Me 262 deliveries to the squadrons.

On March 13, 1945, Göring sent his train to southern Germany loaded with a second cargo of art treasures from Carinhall—739 paintings, 60 pieces of sculpture, and 50 tapestries. He also turned over the seventeen priceless paintings and eleven crates of other relics "rescued from Monte Cassino" to the party Chancellery for separate shipment south, in a truck that left Berlin late on the fourteenth. It was loaded, as Martin Bormann was careful to notify his staff in Bavaria, with "the most valuable paintings from the

Reichsmarschall," and arrived at its destination, a disused mineshaft at Alt Aussee in Austria, two days later.

Göring now remained at Carinhall, although the walls were bare and the bookshelves empty. He descended into Hitler's bunker only infrequently. On March 18, a thousand American bombers again blasted Berlin, escorted by seven hundred fighter planes. Galland sent twenty-eight of his Me 262's into action against them. Hitler had now ordered every captured bomber aviator turned over to the Gestapo for liquidation. "Listen," shouted Göring to his chief of air staff, "has that man gone stark raving mad?"

Not caring what impression he made, Göring wheedled out of his Führer permission to travel down to Berchtesgaden briefly to "inspect the flak." More probably he wanted to check that his trainload of art had arrived safely at Veldenstein. He was living in a deranged world of his own. Hearing of the starvation among the refugees, he ordered one of his rare Schorf Heath bison shot and the carcass distributed to them. Choking upon a newspaper report of this, Goebbels recalled Marie Antoinette and her haughty advice to her own paupered subjects. His field offices reported an "unbridled hatred" of the Reichsmarschall—"Not a trace remains," rejoiced Goebbels, "of his former popularity."

In Göring's absence there emerged a crippling indecisiveness about certain secret Luftwaffe projects. Back in February, acting on the advice of Speer and Baumbach, Hitler had agreed to go ahead with Project Mistletoe, which the air force had long been planning: 120 piggy-backed planes—Ju 88's coupled with Me 109's—were standing by in East Prussia to bomb the principal Soviet power stations at last. Göring too approved, and the fuel was set aside. But in mid-March Hitler decided to hurl these planes at the bridges across the Oder and Neisse rivers the moment the major Russian offensive began. Then he changed his mind—he would use twenty-six of them against the bridges across the Vistula, in the Russians' rear. General Koller objected that the project had originally been designed to wipe out Stalin's power supplies, and that the remaining Mistletoes would not suffice for this project. Hitler hesitated, and was lost—torn between the immediate tactical needs of battle and his long-term strategic objectives: between inevitable defeat, and possible ultimate victory. "Imagine," he told Koller on March 26, "if the enemy had bombed all our power stations simultaneously! I'll forego the Vistula bridges—we can deal with them later."

"Ribbentrop," Hitler told his foreign minister, who was also anxious to end the war by diplomacy, "we're going to win this one by a nose." He mentioned the jet planes—in March 1945 Himmler's underground factory at Nordhausen would in fact assemble five hundred Me 262's and in April twice as many. The first Type XXI submarines were about to enter service—capable of cruising to Japan underwater and at high speed. By late 1945 bombproof underground refineries would be turning out three hundred thousand tons of synthetic gasoline per month. "If only," he remarked to Goeb-

bels on March 21, "Göring had done more to rush the jets into service!" And he added bitterly, "He's just gone down to the Obersalzberg again with two trains, to see his wife."

Göring returned to Berlin keener on peacemaking than ever. When top civil servant Hans Lammers visited the Chancellery for the last time on March 27, he found the Führer very upset about the Reichsmarschall "attempting to start negotiations with the Allies." Emmy Göring certainly dropped hints to Görnert, who stayed behind with the train, that her husband was thinking of contacting the Americans, and Göring confided to Speer that he was sure that the Americans knew he was on their side. One day five American airmen parachuted into the Schorf Heath, and Göring ordered their captain brought to Carinhall. Perhaps he was thinking ahead, to ways of establishing links to the Americans. But this officer had only been a movie director in Hollywood, and Göring lost interest in him.

General Koller's diary establishes how concerned Göring was to end the bloodshed now that Germany appeared to have lost. "Nobody tells us anything," Koller complained to Göring on March 28. "We badly need directives from top level."

The Reichsmarschall agreed. He too is in the dark. F. [Führer] tells him nothing, won't permit the slightest political step. For instance, a British diplomat tried to enter into talks with us in Sweden, but this was flatly forbidden by Hitler.

F. has prohibited Reichsmarschall to use his own extensive contacts. . . . F. has also rejected every opening that the foreign minister has reported to him.

Hitler ordered Göring to attend every war conference at 4:00 P.M., but he dealt preferentially with SS Gruppenführer Kammmler. "Göring," wrote Goebbels on April 3, "has to listen day after day without being able to offer the slightest excuse."

Under pressure from every side, Göring made the decision to authorize Luftwaffe suicide missions. Volunteer pilots would ram the Luftwaffe's few remaining Me 109's into Allied bombers. In mid-March British code-breakers had already intercepted the message that Göring ordered all Geschwader commodores to read out secretly to pilots who had completed fighter training:

The fateful struggle for the Reich, our people, and our native soil is at its climax. Virtually the whole world is fighting against us and is resolved to destroy us and, in blind hatred, to exterminate us. With our last and utmost strength we are standing up to this menacing onslaught. Now as never before in the history of the German fatherland we are threatened with final annihilation from

scene

*Hitler's
meetings
are now
more
therapy
than purpose.*

which there can be no revival. This danger can be arrested only by the utmost preparedness of the supreme German warrior spirit.

Therefore, I turn to you at this decisive moment. By consciously staking your own lives, save the nation from extinction! *I summon you for an operation from which you will have only the slenderest chance of returning.* Those of you who respond will be sent back at once for pilot training. Comrades, you will take the place of honor beside your most glorious Luftwaffe warriors. In the hour of supreme danger, you will give the whole German people hope of victory, and set an example for all time. GÖRING.

*one pilot
decides
that he will
go into
training +
then go
undisciplined
to survive.*

The first mission, code-named *Werewolf*, ran into pragmatic objections. General Koller pointed out that if the Me 109's were used up on this, all reconnaissance and conventional-fighter operations would collapse until Focke-Wulf's new Ta 152 and the Me 262 became available in large numbers. But Hitler gave the go-ahead. Several hundred volunteers were given ten days of ideological training at Stendal, and on April 4, General Pelz, whose IX Air Corps would control the mission, reported all ready for *Werewolf*. "For psychological reasons," Pelz told the Luftwaffe high command, "we should not delay too long with the actual operation." Three days later *Werewolf* was executed—one of the most desperate Luftwaffe operations of the war. The Luftwaffe war diary confirms that 180 suicide crews took part, escorted into battle by their less-exalted comrades from JG7 and the first squadron of KG54(J). Astonished Allied radio monitors heard patriotic marches flooding the fighter-control wavelength and a female choir singing the German national anthem, while anonymous voices exhorted these 180 pilots to die—now—for the Führer and for Germany. Seventy of them did.

Such was the heroism of which Göring's young airmen were capable even on the threshold of national defeat. But there were also acts of a different hue. On March 30, Messerschmitt ferry-pilot Henry Fay picked up a brand new Me 262 jet to fly to Neuburg Airbase on the Danube. He deserted to the Americans and handed the top-secret plane over in return for a promise of immediate release to his mother. Fay also revealed to the Americans where the Me 262 and its fuel were manufactured, and described its most vulnerable points. "Aim for the engines," he recommended, "as they catch fire easily."

At 5:00 A.M. on April 16, 1945, the final Soviet push across the Oder began. Sixty more suicide pilots crash-bombed their planes onto the Oder bridges in a desperate attempt to save Berlin.

But the decay of defeat had already reached the highest levels in the capital. Learning that even Speer had disobeyed orders to destroy bridges within Berlin, Hitler challenged him to say whether he still believed in victory.

"I cannot say that I do," the minister replied. But he agreed without enthusiasm that he still *wished* that the war could be won.

"I thank you for saying the best you could," replied Hitler. "But I can say only this"—and Göring, watching, saw the perspiration standing out on his brow—"We must hold on until the last hour! No matter how much Donner and Blitzen! I know we shall come through."

Göring intended to come through. He was packed and ready to go. He was leaving one thousand air-force troops to guard his Carinhall estate. Demolition charges laced the beautiful structure. The art treasures too bulky to evacuate were being buried by troops of the Hermann Göring Panzer Corps and their position marked on a map—Houdon's "Bather," Pigalle's "Madame de Pompadour," and the famous Venus given to him by Italy. A costly fountain and two Cladion caryatids were carried out into the heath and hidden.

On April 19, he signed letters directing the August-Thyssen Bank to cable half a million marks to his personal account at the Bayerische Hypotheken und Wechsel Bank in Berchtesgaden, and closing out the old Deutsche Bank account that he had opened in Berlin's Schöneberg suburb when he first arrived there with Carin in 1928.

As midnight approached, he stationed his portly person outside Hitler's bunker and waited to go in, to present his birthday wishes. Many happy returns hardly seemed appropriate—he inquired whether he might be able to serve the Reich better at a distance from Berlin, Berchtesgaden perhaps? Hitler merely nodded toward the door.

Göring took that as yes, but to his dismay Hitler phoned soon after to say that he would expect the Reichsmarschall at the midday conference as usual.

It was not a restful night, what with the Russian troops so close by. The next morning Göring plodded off through the pine woods to the mausoleum by the lake, to say farewell to Carin—the wife to whom he owed his personal salvation. As he eased his bulk down the narrow, moss-covered stone steps, he could hear the rippling sound of Russian artillery lobbing shells into the eastern outskirts of Berlin. He knelt briefly, then straightened and left the cold granite tomb where once he had planned to join her.

He drove along the deserted autobahn into the city, taking only his doctor Ramon von Ondarza with him. At the noon conference he found twenty senior officers standing shoulder to shoulder around the cramped briefing table. Hitler announced that he was splitting up the high command—Admiral Dönitz would command in the north and Göring in the south until such time as he himself arrived from Berlin. As he signed the orders, his right hand trembled violently.

Not keen to be trapped like a rat in Berlin, General Koller pointed out in his thick Bavarian brogue that nobody should bank on being able to fly out, and that the Russians might cut off Berlin at any moment. The bunker room emptied rapidly.

Göring lingered behind. "Mein Führer," he ventured. "I presume you have no objection to my leaving for the Obersalzberg right away?"

*One more
betrayal?
Or not?
Emma & Golda*

"Do what you want," said Hitler curtly. "But then Koller stays here."

It was an ignominious parting for two men who had been each other's fortune and misfortune for over twenty years. But even Koller found it hard to condemn Göring for turning his back on the clique around Hitler. He had not a single friend there now—there remained just ambitious men who had fought tooth and claw for power, while millions of ordinary citizens had perished.

It must have been now that a curious private discussion took place between Göring and Himmler. Göring touched on it only once in later months, saying it was the last time he saw Himmler (and Hitler's secretary Gerda Christian specifically recalled seeing Himmler and Göring talking this day). For "two or three hours," Göring recalled, they talked on the delicate topic of how to make contact with the enemy. Himmler smugly revealed that the Swedish Count Folke Bernadotte had recently visited him, and was actually returning for a further meeting that evening at Hohenlychen, the SS clinic. "You know," boasted Himmler, "he must be the man sent by Eisenhower to negotiate."

Göring felt sick. "I can't believe that," he said woodenly. "Don't take offense, but I doubt that they'll find you acceptable as a negotiating partner."

"Sorry to contradict," smiled Himmler. "But I have incontrovertible proof that I am considered abroad to be the only person capable of maintaining order."

At this, Göring shut up. Perhaps Himmler knew more than he. As they parted, the Reichsführer asked him rather too insistently whether he, Göring, would appoint him chancellor in the event that anything now happened to the Führer. Göring mumbled that that would not be possible since constitutionally both offices were now combined.

"Herr Reichsmarschall," persisted Himmler delicately. "If anything should prevent you from succeeding the Führer—say you are eliminated (*ausgeschaltet*)—can I have the job?"

Göring gulped. Eliminated? He recalled that after the July 1944 bomb plot Popitz had testified under interrogation that Himmler was planning to replace Göring in the line of succession, and that upon reading this he had asked permission to interrogate the condemned man himself. But the Gestapo hangman had got to Popitz first. "My dear Himmler," he replied uneasily. "We shall have to wait and see. That will depend upon circumstances. I can't see for the life of me what might prevent me from taking up the office."

Darkness fell on the Reich capital. RAF Mosquito bombers had begun pummeling Berlin. On an impulse Göring decided to visit the air-raid shelters—although he would have been better advised to depart before the one remaining road to the south was overrun.

It is clear that he wanted to test his own popularity. Wisecracking his way from one bunker to another, he said farewell to the stoical Berliners. Word

scene

→ His
must
start
working

←

— *revert of
the last
scene.*

spread ahead, and messengers came from other shelters—the people there wanted to see “Herr Meier,” the Reichsmarschall, too. He doubted they would have greeted the Reichsführer SS like this. After that, in his own words later, “We headed for the hills.”

It was 2:20 A.M. before he and Ondarza arrived out at Kurfürst. His own armor-plated limousine, chauffeured by the trusty Wilhelm Schulz, was followed out of the courtyard by four more, laden with staff, detectives, and Philipp Bouhler. In Göring’s own limousine traveled his manservant Robert and nurse Christa, who had custody of his medicine cabinet. Throughout the night the convoy drove south between the closing jaws of the Russian and American armies. Once, around Jüterbog, he glanced back. The skyline was rimmed by a fiery haze lit by the flicker of artillery. Relief at escaping eclipsed all other emotions. Tomorrow he would be on the Obersalzberg: From there he intended to extend formal peace feelers to Eisenhower and Churchill. He would end the war parleying and dealing, just as he had begun it, and he would not allow Herr Himmler to preempt him.

The route passed through Pilsen in Czechoslovakia. The Air Ministry had been evacuated here, but he made no attempt to contact it, merely pausing at a mobile flak unit to refuel before driving on.

He arrived on the Obersalzberg at 11:00 A.M. The villa was crowded—Edda, Emmy, her sister, nephews, and nieces. Since Hermann’s sister Paula was here too—the Russians were sweeping across Austria—he was surrounded by the females of his family. Here, he was at peace. No 88’s barked into the tranquil mountain skies, no searchlights fingered the horizon, when phones jangled they did so only distantly.

Dismissing from his mind even the six railroad cars with Hofer and the art collection down at Berchtesgaden, Hermann Göring tucked himself into his bed and fell into a long and dreamless sleep.

PART 6

THE
SURROGATE

469

42 INTO THE CAGE

Often it is only in adversity that a man rises above his superficial character. For Reichsmarschall Hermann Göring, now age fifty-two, that adversity began with his delivery into American hands on Tuesday evening, May 7, 1945. He possessed at that moment the same lethal elixir that many of his comrades now chose; he had concealed about his person effects at least three brass capsules that Philipp ("Ango") Bouhler had given him—each fashioned from a nine-millimeter cartridge case about one and a half inches (35mm) long, and each containing a glass phial of hydrocyanic acid.

But he did not mean to swallow poison yet. He was acutely aware that his illustrious name was now the butt of derision. Meaner contemporaries might prostrate themselves before their captors, but he would stand his ground, fight one last defiant round, and die in honor.

As the little convoys of American and German cars met, the darkening valleys around echoed with the crackle and thunder of exploding ammunition as German troops destroyed their remaining stocks. Brigadier General Robert I. Stack, assistant commander of the 36th U.S. Infantry Division, motioned Göring toward his car. To the young Luftwaffe troops who clustered around, the American general's aide announced, "Your Reichsmarschall is kaput!"

Stack suggested that they spend the night at Fischhorn Castle near Zell am See before returning to the American lines.

As they drove up to the gaunt stone building, Göring glimpsed a G.I. and an SS officer standing guard on opposite sides of the gateway. Rather alarmingly, the castle still housed the staff of an SS cavalry division.* "Guard me well," he said, turning to his captors, but a Luftwaffe major noticed that his face was wreathed in smiles. Emmy and Heli Bouhler fell into each other's arms as they stepped out of the cars.

"When do I get to meet Eisenhower?" asked Göring.

Stack answered evasively.

Later, Göring returned to the matter. He turned to the interpreter. "Ask General Stack," he said, "whether I should wear a pistol or my ceremonial dagger when I appear before Eisenhower."

"I don't care two hoots," retorted the general.

Göring flushed, and went up to the room allocated to him to take a bath before dinner. He put on his pearl-gray uniform and a dozen medals, and posed impatiently for photographers, standing in front of the Lone Star flag of Texas. Before retiring from the dinner table, he asked whether he might retain four submachine guns for his protection. After talking it over with the castle's SS commander, Standartenführer [Colonel] Waldemar Fegelein, the American allowed him this comfort.

"I've formed a good impression of Stack," Göring told Emmy privately. "Perhaps I can still do something to help Germany."

She automatically lowered the window blinds before switching on the lights. "The war's over," Göring benignly reminded her, and withdrew into his room. She had asked for a separate room for herself and little Edda—she wanted her husband to be alone to compose his thoughts for the next day's historic meetings. She could hear the floorboards creak as he paced up and down in carpet slippers, imagining his dialogue with General Eisenhower the next day.

They parted in the castle courtyard the next morning. He had chosen a plain air-force uniform with forage cap—a ring or two and bejeweled cufflinks being the day's only concession to foppery. "It's not farewell," he reassured her as he climbed into the flashy twelve-cylinder Maybach for the drive through the lines to Stack's headquarters. "Things are looking good."

She gave him a meaningful look. "Do you still have what Ango gave you?"

He nodded, barely perceptibly, not taking his eyes off the matching blue set of luggage as it was stowed into the American cars. They parted. It would be eighteen months before he saw either wife or daughter again.

*In its basement an SS officer had concealed a tin trunk containing the private diaries of Hitler's mistress Eva Braun and bundles of the hundreds of letters that she and Adolf had exchanged. Found by an American CIC officer a few months later, these documents are now sadly missing.

The Texas Division had its headquarters in the five-star Grand Hotel at Kitzbühl. G.I.'s and reporters mobbed the little convoy as it arrived. The division commander, Major General John E. Dahlquist, saluted Göring, shook hands, and invited him to share his lunch of chicken, potatoes, and peas eaten out of a mess tin. Afterwards, the Reichsmarschall—for such was still his rank—went out onto the hotel balcony so that the American and German troops milling around the Maybach could take snapshots. One report even said he had a champagne glass in his hand.

Dahlquist asked his opinion of the other Nazi leaders. Still angry at the Führer's all too recent death sentence on him, Göring described Hitler as narrow-minded and ignorant, adding that Ribbentrop was a scoundrel and Hess an eccentric. Dahlquist perceived an underlying irritation at his captors' tardiness in bringing him together with Eisenhower.

As the days wore on, such a meeting seemed increasingly unlikely. A tiny Piper Cub flew him on May 10 across to U.S. Seventh Army headquarters at Augsburg. His composure was unshaken until Lieutenant General Alexander M. Patch asked him why Nazi Germany had not overrun Spain and Gibraltar in 1940, thus bottling up the British Fleet in the Mediterranean. "That was always my advice!" screamed Göring. "Always, always, always! And it was never, never taken."

At 5:00 P.M. he was brought face to face with his principal American adversary, General Spaatz, commanding general of the U.S. strategic air forces. Göring saluted, and Spaatz gave the correct salute in response (nor did he have the slightest misgivings about doing so, as he told Colonel Lindbergh five days later). Bruce Hopper, Spaatz's chief historian, took in the heavy silver ring on the Reichsmarschall's third finger, the clear blue eyes, the ruddy but not unpleasant features, the outsize thighs, and the tan-colored boots. Göring responded to questions with a good humor that belied his growing concern.

"In the Battle of Britain," asked Spaatz, "why did you maintain such rigid formations of fighters and bombers?"

"It was necessary to escort the bombers because their firepower was low (not like your bombers)."

"Was the Junkers 88 designed for the Battle of Britain?"

"We had nothing else," explained Göring. "I was not in favor of engaging in the Battle of Britain at that time. It was too early."

He asked Spaatz if a bottle of whiskey could be produced, and General Patch rather grudgingly obliged. Spaatz asked the Luftwaffe chief whether the jet airplane ever really had a chance of winning the war.

"Yes," said Göring, "I am convinced—if only we had had four or five months more. Our underground installations were practically ready. The factory in the Harz had a capacity of a thousand to twelve hundred jet airplanes a month. Now with five to six thousand jets, the outcome would have been very different!"

Lieutenant General Hoyt Vandenberg, of the Ninth Air Force, chipped in, "But could you have trained sufficient jet pilots given your shortage of oil?"

"Oh, yes," replied Göring. "We would have had underground oil plants producing a sufficient quantity for the jets. The pilot's conversion to the jets was very easy. Output of jet pilots was always a month ahead of jet-aircraft production."

Spaatz leaned forward. He inquired intently which had contributed more to the defeat of Nazi Germany—precision bombing or area bombing? It was a question of patriotic importance, and Göring knew it. "Your precision bombing," he flattered Spaatz, "because that was decisive. A ruined industry was difficult to replace. . . . I myself planned to carry out only precision bombing at the beginning. I wanted to lay a barrier of contact mines around Britain and seal off her ports, but again I was forced to do otherwise by political Diktat."

Recalling this unusual dialogue years later in an oral interview, Brigadier General Glenn O. Barcus remembered that Spaatz asked Göring whether he had any recommendations as to the improvement of American airpower. "Göring kind of smiled, and said, 'I should be telling *you* about how to use air power!'" The verbatim record in Spaatz's papers shows that he asked, "If you had to design the Luftwaffe again, what would be the first airplane you would develop?" "The jet fighter," said Göring, "and then the jet bomber. The problem of speed has been solved. It is now a question of fuel. The jet fighter consumes too much. The Me 264 jet bomber, designed to fly to America and back, awaited only the final solution of this problem."

"Did you have a three-inch gun for the jet?" asked Spaatz.

"The fifty-five-millimeter cannon, which is only now going into production, would have made a great difference in the jet. While waiting for that, we were using the fifty-five-millimeter rocket. You might find some jet airplanes around Germany equipped with [55mm] antitank guns. Don't blame me for such monstrosities. This was done on the explicit orders of the Führer. Hitler knew nothing about the air . . . absolutely nothing. He even considered the Me 262 to be a bomber, and he insisted it should be called a bomber!"

After this talk they took him into the kitchen of the camp office, and stripped him of all his medals and insignia except for his Reichsmarschall's epaulets. On the following day, May 11, 1945, he was taken out of the back door of the two-story suburban house in Augsburg to meet fifty Allied newspapermen. Gripping a pair of matching gray suede gloves, he slumped into an easy chair and mopped at his brow as the shutters clicked. After five minutes they allowed him to move into the thin shade of a willow tree. The questioning resumed. Heaping blame for the first time in public on Martin Bormann, he insisted that it must have been Bormann and not Hitler who had nominated Dönitz as the new Führer. "Hitler," rasped Göring, "did not leave a thing in writing saying that Dönitz was to take his place!"

He publicly revealed that he had opposed Hitler's attack on Russia. "I

I pointed out to him," said Göring, "his own words in *Mein Kampf* concerning a two-front war. . . . But Hitler believed that by the year's end he could bring Russia to her knees." He revealed to the newspapermen his unhappiest moment of the war. "The greatest surprise of the war to us was the long-range fighter bomber that could take off from England, attack Berlin, and return to its home base. I realized," he added disarmingly, "that the war was lost shortly after the [June 1944] invasion of France and the subsequent breakthrough."

Asked inevitably about the Nazi extermination camps, Göring was dismissive. "I was never so close to Hitler as to have him express himself to me on this subject," he said. He was sure that these atrocity reports were "merely propaganda. Hitler," he concluded, recalling that trembling right hand signing the documents, "had something wrong with his brain the last time I saw him."

Göring was removed to the Seventh Army's interrogation center at the Villa Pagenstecher in Wiesbaden and he was held here for a week. "Göring tried hard to make a case for himself," wrote one of the Intelligence officers after interviewing him, "and despite rumors to the contrary is far from being mentally deranged. In fact he must be considered a very 'shrewd customer,' a great actor and professional liar who most likely made some mental reservations, trying to keep what he might consider a few aces up his sleeve in order to have some bargaining power if and when the need arises." "If you know my speeches," Göring said at one point, "you will admit that in none of them have I attacked foreign statesmen in person." With the utmost sincerity he even claimed never to have signed a man's death warrant, or sent anybody to a concentration camp—"never, never, never. Unless of course," he remarked as an afterthought, "it was a question of military necessity and expediency!"

He still sidestepped all knowledge of atrocities in the camps. "I always thought that they were places where people were put to useful work," he said. Shown grim pictures taken at Dachau, he pondered overnight and came up with this answer: "Those pictures that you showed me yesterday must depict things that happened in the final few days. . . . Himmler must have suddenly derived a fiendish pleasure from such things." He redoubled his efforts to disclaim any responsibility. He reminded his interrogators that the atrocity stories spread after World War I had turned out to be untrue.

Hidden microphones heard him discuss at length with Hans Lammers the "fraudulent" claim by Dönitz to be the new head of government. "You know about it," Göring reminded Lamm, "only through Dönitz's broadcast. Anybody might turn up tomorrow and declare, 'I received a radio signal after Dönitz got his—now I am head of state!' But I have written proof." Lammers listened intently. "Yes," he agreed, "that's clear. He'll have to produce documentary proof."

The two men reexamined the decrees signed by Hitler in 1934 and 1941,

then reconsidered the last signal Bormann had transmitted from the bunker: "*In the place of Reichsmarschall Göring, the Führer appoints you, Grand Admiral, as his successor.*" "Is there anything," shouted Göring, "more fantastic than this fraud committed by Bormann? . . . Well, I must say those damn crooks have pulled a fast one. It beats everything. . . . I always knew that if anything happened to the Führer, my life would be in the gravest danger for the next forty-eight hours. After that I would have been sworn in and it would have taken legal effect. Whatever happened, I would have arrested Bormann in forty-eight hours—and he knew it, too!—and sacked Ribbentrop. Those two were the thorns in my flesh."

Talking with interrogators again, he willingly blamed Hitler but denied that they had seriously planned to use chemical warfare or nerve gas. "None of your gas masks would have afforded any protection," he added. "This gas was so dangerous that I would not permit another demonstration. I knew that the gas would have had to be transported to the rear when the Americans came, and the result of an air attack on the train might have been catastrophic. . . . We knew we were the more advanced in chemical warfare and that we had the more deadly gases." Talking of the fire storms in Hamburg and Dresden, he dabbed at his eyes. "It was terrible," he said. "The people of Dresden could not believe that you would bomb their city, because they thought that Dresden was too well known as a cultural center." Then he changed the subject. "The people," he boasted to chief interrogator Major Paul Kubala, "never called me anything but Hermann! Just Hermann! Never anything but Hermann! To be called by one's first name—that is the height of popularity."

His evacuated Carinhall art collection had now been found. The special train had carried on from Veldenstein to Berchtesgaden on April 13. Göring's troops had carried the most spectacular items into a secret cavern walled into a tunnel beneath his staff quarters on the Unsterstein Mountain. As the French Moroccan troops invaded Berchtesgaden, Hofer and Göring's secretary Fräulein Limberger fled the train. "Jewel cases were opened," said Göring later, "and the gems taken, the settings were scattered all around."

After the French came the Americans, the famous 101st Airborne Division. Questioning Göring's household staff, Lieutenant Raymond F. Newkirk heard the first rumors of the walled-up cavern. The tunnel's engineer was located, and he led Newkirk to the second level of a series of underground tunnels. A platoon of U.S. Army engineers broke into the hidden room. It took four days to empty the cavern. It was very damp, and the priceless contents were protected from the water dripping from the ceiling only by costly tapestries that had been hastily flung over them. The paintings were stacked up outside—works by Rubens, Rembrandt, Van Dyck, Boucher, and Botticelli. There was the "Infanta Margareta" by Velázquez, which Göring had bought from a seized Rothschild collection in 1941; and there was a "Rembrandt"

head of an old man with marvelous nuances of gray, which Göring had bought from a Paris dealer in 1940.*

Göring never let his blue luggage out of his sight. Occasionally he checked his magnificently-crafted toilet case with all the colognes, hand cream, and talcum powder to make sure that nothing was missing.

"Where are your private jewels?" he was asked by one interrogator.

"I would like to know that myself," was his wan reply.

On May 14, his valet Robert had been sent back to Fischhorn Castle to collect a Rothschild painting. Göring handed it over to Major Kubala and the French liaison officer, Captain Albert Zoller, on the fifteenth—a fifteenth-century painting called "The Madonna of Memling." His bejeweled Reichsmarschall's baton was at that very moment in a parcel being mailed home by a G.I.; intercepted by U.S. Customs, it is now on display at West Point. His 1935 Wedding Sword, stolen by an American platoon sergeant, dwells in a bank safe in Indiana—its value enhanced by the legends about its owner, as though it were Siegfried's sword itself.

Göring had several conversations with the Frenchman Zoller. "Little things," he philosophized, "can have big results. All our cities were devastated, one after the other, and those damned aluminum strips were to blame!"

Several more times the hidden microphones overheard him talking to Lammers about what he would have done if Hitler had died earlier. "I told some gauleiters who were close to me," he remarked on May 19, "about a year and a half ago . . . that if Fate ever destined me to succeed Hitler, I would place a supreme court above me. I told myself that no man ought to assume the responsibility of being answerable to nobody. A dictatorship," he wheezed, "must never come again. It does not work. We see it now. In the beginning everything is wonderful, but then it all gets out of hand."

He complained several times about the humiliating treatment by the Americans. "It is usual," he told Major Kubala, "for a marshal to have a house of his own to live in." Kubala reported that Göring was claiming to have asked Eisenhower for safe-conduct when he "gave himself up," and was indignant now to find himself a prisoner of war. "He is worried," added Kubala on May 23, "about his private possessions."

Göring kept a huntsman's weather eye open for officers whom he could use. He blatantly flattered the Americans. "Without the American Air Force," he assured Lieutenant Colonel Eric M. Warburg, a former Hamburg banker who had served in the Prussian artillery in World War I, "the war would still be going on—but assuredly not on German soil!" He pitted his brains particularly against "Major Evans,"—in real life the Wall Street financier Ernst Englander. Englander was motivated by a thirst for revenge. "I should like to see those boys hang and sweat," he wrote in one private letter at this

*The "Rembrandt" was a fake.

time, "rather than to make themselves out as heroes and martyrs." For several days they sparred. "I found it easier," Englander wrote, "to deal with them by getting reasonably chummy, and as a result Göring asked me to do a favor and see his wife for him."

A tattered snapshot of Emmy and Edda was Göring's most cherished possession. On the back he now penned these words to Emmy: "Major Evans has my confidence. Hermann Göring." To remunerate the officer he also gave him a portrait, signed to "Major Evans, in grateful memory, Hermann Göring." Englander thanked him effusively. It did not escape the prisoner that some American officers would do almost anything in return for a personal souvenir.

On May 20, 1945, they flew him in a small six-seater plane—he had to enter through the cargo hatch—to Luxembourg. With him went a written report from Major Kubala, warning against regarding the captive as a comical figure. Göring was cool and calculating, and "able to grasp the fundamental issues under discussion quickly. He is certainly not a man to be underrated."

They held him in Luxembourg for three months. It was plain that there was to be a major trial. Among the fifty fellow Nazis interned here in the Grand Hotel of the little spa town of Mondorf-les-Bains he found Hans Frank, his wrists still bandaged from a suicide attempt, as well as Bohle, Brandt, Daluge, Darré, Frick, Funk, Jodl, Keitel, Ley, Ribbentrop, Rosenberg, and Streicher. He registered with quiet satisfaction that Dönitz, his rival as "Hitler's successor," had also been unceremoniously dumped here too. They agreed on an uneasy truce. "I have always been the second man in the state," Göring told the admiral's adjutant Walther Lüdde-Neurath. "And you can be quite certain that if we're for the high jump, mine will be the first head into the noose!"

There was little luxury about his fourth-floor room. To prevent suicides, the Americans had removed all power supplies and light bulbs and had replaced sixteen hundred window panes with Perspex sheets. After General Greim, his successor as commander in chief, swallowed poison on May 24, the Americans suddenly seized Göring's luggage, to his dismay, and a triumphant G.I. immediately found the brass cyanide cartridge that he had concealed in a tin of American coffee. The Americans now looked no further.

This unusual hotel was commanded by Burton C. Andrus, a pompous and unimaginative colonel in the U.S. Cavalry who moved about majestically, his plump figure impeccably garbed in a uniform and highly polished helmet. Andrus had not been anxious for the job. He knew, as he told his family a year later, that this was one job where he could not win: Like a tightrope walker crossing Niagara Falls, he knew that if he slipped it would be his neck; while if he didn't, the box-office receipts went to the stockholders. Göring gave him sleepless nights to the end of his life. Minutes before Colonel

Andrus died, years later, he stumbled out of bed, wide-eyed and staring, moaning: "I've got to get to Göring's cell—he's killing himself!"

The hatred was mutual between the two men. Göring called him the "fire chief" because of that helmet, and squirmed to think that this man had sequestered all his treasures, including, according to the inventory in the Andrus papers:

one gold Luftwaffe badge; one gold Luftwaffe badge with diamonds; one desk watch; one traveling clock by Movado; *one large personal toilet case*,* one gold cigarette case, inlaid with amethyst and monogrammed by Prince Paul of Yugoslavia; one silver pill box; one gold and velvet cigar case; one square watch by Cartier, set with diamonds; one gold chain, gold pencil, and cutter; three keys; one emerald ring; one diamond ring; one ruby ring; four semi-precious buttons; one small eagle with diamond clips; one diamond Luftwaffe brooch; four cufflinks with semi-precious stones; one gold pin (evergreen twig); one pearl stickpin; one gold stickpin with swastika of diamond chips; one watch fob (platinum, onyx stones, diamond, inlaid Luftwaffe insignia); one personal seal (in silver); one small watch set with artificial diamonds; one medal Pour le Mérite; one Iron Cross 1st Class, 1914; one Gross Kreuz; one gold cigarette-lighter, one wrist watch; two old Norse collar buckles; one brass compass; *one fountain pen inscribed "Hermann Göring"*; one silver cigar-cutter; one brooch; one silver watch; one set of lapis lazuli cuff buttons; one silver box, heart-shaped; one platinum Iron Cross; one gilded pencil; *one large Swiss wristwatch*; 81,268 Reichsmarks.

It is worth noting what became of this personal treasure trove. The "toilet case" italicized above was back in his possession at the end, nobody knows how. After Göring's death, Emmy signed a receipt—still in Andrus's private papers—for 750 Reichsmarks, two large suitcases, one hatbox, one fitted bag, and other listed items that did not include any of the medals inventoried earlier, nor the fountain pen or large Swiss wristwatch italicized above. Evidently he had given these away. The latter items, pen and wristwatch, were later seen in the possession of the widow of Jack Wheelis, the U.S. Army second lieutenant whom he had befriended before his death, as will be seen.

Andrus was a meticulous keeper of records. He was committed to keeping these men alive, and his security measures here at Mondorf did not improve

*Italics here and below are the author's.

their mood. He allowed them no knives, and meals were eaten off plain brown glazed crockery with a blunt spoon.

"I used to feed my dogs better than this," growled Göring.

"Then you fed them better than your own soldiers," shouted a German kitchen hand—a remark that convinced Colonel Andrus, as he later testified to an army board of inquiry, that he could rely on these Germans not to give illegal succor to his captives.

Göring plunged into a deepening gloom. He began to worry incessantly: about the fate of Emmy and little Edda, and about how to get into his blue leather cases. //

43 FAT STUFF

The cause for which Göring stood,"
the Seventh Army interrogation center had reported on May 23, 1945,

"is lost. But the canny Hermann even now thinks only what he can do to salvage some of his personal fortune, and to create an advantageous position for himself. He condemns the once-beloved Führer without hesitation. Up to now he has not made a plea in favor of his former henchmen, alive or dead. Yet behind his spirited and often witty conversation is a constant watchfulness for the opportunity to place himself in a favorable light."

Göring's treatment at Mondorf had undoubtedly shaken him. His valet Robert had been taken away from him. His room was barely furnished and unfit. Of his toilet articles he had been left only a sponge, soap, and toothbrush—nothing else, not even a comb. He wrote to protest to Eisenhower at this illegal treatment. "I cannot believe that Your Excellency wishes and knows about the humiliating effect this treatment has upon me." He requested permission to return briefly by plane to his family so that he could at least make the most essential arrangements for them and take proper leave of them. He received no reply.

To while away that time, Admiral Hans von Friedeburg's adjutant taught the fifty imprisoned men how to play Battleships. Göring sank Dönitz's

warships with as much gusto as if they had been real, but he did not like to lose, and once the admiral protested, "Hermann's cheating! If he doesn't like where my shells are falling, he marks them in on different squares!"

Given a medical examination, Göring weighed in at 264 pounds, which was very fat indeed. (He would weigh only 186 pounds at the end.) His height was five foot ten, he was perspiring profusely, short of breath but not acutely ill. His pulse was 84, but full of extra contractions (systoles). "His skin," reported the medic, "is moist, pale, and sallow except his face, which is flushed. There is a marked irregular tremor of both hands and he appears to be extremely nervous or excited." They found no diseases, and remarked that he was well developed "but extremely obese, flaccid, and generally in very poor physical condition." Göring told the doctors that over the past few months he had suffered increasingly frequent heart attacks "manifested by pericardial distress, dyspnoea, profuse perspiration, and nervousness."

The Americans had found two thousand mysterious white pills in his possession. He told them he took twenty each day, night and morning. "My surgeon," explained Andrus helplessly to Supreme Headquarters, Allied Expeditionary Force (SHAEF) on May 23, "reports that if we suddenly remove this [medication] from him he will become totally demented." SHAEF replied that their only concern was that the prisoner remain coherent for some time to come. "There are a number of things we wish to ask him," they notified Andrus, referring probably to Europe's missing art treasures, "before we finally lose interest in what happens to him."

Colonel Andrus directed his prison surgeon, Captain (M.C.) Clint L. Miller, to reduce the dosage of these pills as rapidly as possible without killing Göring or driving him insane. Nine of the pills had meanwhile been sent to Washington, D.C., for analysis. "It was found," reported the FBI in a letter signed by J. Edgar Hoover himself, "that the tablets contain 10 mg or 1/16 grain of the narcotic dihydro-codeine." Dr. Nathan B. Eddy of the National Institutes of Health described this as "not approaching morphine in its effects or degree of addiction," being only about one-fifth as strong as morphine, but Eddy warned that any abrupt withdrawal would evoke the same severe symptoms.

The interrogations of "Fat Stuff," as the Americans here called him, were less friendly than at Augsburg. Major Hiram Gans, a SHAEF financial expert, tried to throw light on the truculent Reichsmarschall's monetary dealings. "Does your wife have an insurance policy?"

"No."

"Did you leave anything for your child?"

"She gets something at the age of twenty. You can have that too!"

"We're not kidding! These are things that you robbed from everyone else, and we are going to see that they are restored."

Göring corrected him. In his view he had acquired his art collection quite legally.

"Most of these things were bought, yes," conceded Gans, who had evidently done his homework. "But at a price fixed by you!"

Subtly playing on underlying American fears, Göring spoke of the seductive Russian propaganda methods and reminded Gans that once before Germany and Russia had collaborated for a century. "At first," he continued, referring to most recent history, "the Germans were very afraid of the Russians. . . . Immediately after the collapse, the Russians did a skillful job over the radio: they proclaimed that Germany must not be partitioned again, and they started to reopen the German theaters. In this zone you have adopted the opposite approach."

The Americans found it hard to undermine his morale although he was now deeply concerned about Emmy and Edda. On June 25 Lieutenant Herbert Dubois took over the grilling. "Do you know that Hitler, Himmler, and Goebbels are dead? . . . You are the last great Nazi. How did you manage to survive? Why haven't you died?"

"It was an accident," responded Göring. Dubois discomfited him by asking about the billion Reichsmark fine that he had levied on the Jewish community in November 1938. "Is a German field marshal never ashamed?" he challenged.

At first the Reichsmarschall was evasive—"I don't have to answer that question under the Geneva Convention"—but he immediately afterward softened enough to utter one of his rare expressions of personal remorse. "I regret it. You have to take the times into account."

On May 10, 1945, Dr. Robert Kempner, a former Prussian civil servant who had emigrated to Pennsylvania, wrote to the Pentagon pointing out that during Göring's jurisdiction over police matters in 1933 many people had been tortured and killed. "Such cases," Kempner continued, "were brought to his personal attention. At that time bribery was one of the chief means of obtaining release from concentration camps. The money, jewelry, or gold cigarette cases were turned over to his fiancée, now Mrs. Emmy Sonnemann Göring, who has also been captured." Little of this was true, but to break down Göring's "staged self-assurance" Kempner pleaded for Göring to be brought to the United States for interrogation on his morphine addiction, on Emmy's "former intimate friendship with a Jewish theatrical man" and Hermann's "relationship to the late Austrian Jewish landowner Baron Hermann von Epenstein." The suggestion was disregarded. Instead Kempner, himself a Jew, would be taken onto the prosecution staff at Nuremberg.

Evidence against Göring was raked together from the most eclectic sources. British intelligence intercepted a letter in June 1945 from Stockholm to London in which a Mrs. Anna Morck wrote that Göring had given jewelry

—Göring's
jealousy?
He questioned
Emmy.

to Carin's sister Lily Martin—"Things stolen from Poland and other places, which ought to be given back." Hidden microphones installed in a special prison camp outside London recorded Göring's generals in, as they thought, private conversation. Bodenschatz was heard telling Milch that Göring was "the most ungrateful man in the world!" "Always was," agreed Milch. "A rotten character." When he described the Reichsmarschall's mauve-painted fingernails Galland corrected him: "It wasn't paint, it was a transparent varnish." "Bodenschatz," said Milch, "you say the Führer gave Göring a monthly allowance of thirty thousand Reichsmarks. Do you imagine he met all his expenses out of that? . . . The three hundred and sixty thousand marks he received each year wouldn't last him even a month!" Each scrap of conversation was transcribed and sent secretly to brief Göring's interrogators.

Now calling himself "Major Emery," Ernst Englander visited this camp on June 5 and told Milch, Koller, and Galland that Göring was blackening their names. The angry generals exchanged more scuttlebutt about him. In his private diary Milch jotted down what the others told him of Göring's sleazy dealings with Heinkel, Siebel, Koppenberg, and aluminum factories in Norway. Told of Göring's apparent interest in Professor Morell's pharmaceutical empire, General Kreipe chimed in that the Reichsmarschall had also been the majority shareholder in a certain brand of contraceptives. "Do you know," replied Milch, capping that tidbit, "that our commander in chief received money personally for each picture hanging in a barracks?!" He banged his first on the table. "Do you know that our commander in chief pocketed a fine of fourteen million Dutch guilders imposed for a rebellion somewhere in Holland and transferred them to Switzerland for his personal use?*" The SS told me all this, and backed it up with evidence. But there is such a thing as poetic justice, gentlemen! . . . Göring's chauffeur made off with a case containing all Mrs. Göring's jewelry."

Emmy Göring had been allowed to return to a little cottage near Veldenstein. One day an American army sergeant arrived and told her in confidence that her husband had been secretly tried and acquitted, and would be released the next day. Emmy had never been noted for political acuity. She happily gave the messenger a precious emerald ring, scraped together some victuals for a welcoming feast, and waited for several days before she could accept that the man had been a trickster.

Confined at Mondorf still, Göring paced his cage like a trapped lion. For a man born and bred in the mountains, who had spent his youth in the skies

*General Christiansen, military commander of the Netherlands, had imposed a 14-million-guilder levy on a Dutch community. The British informed Allied officials at Nuremberg of the overheard allegation, namely that Göring had given 1 million guilders of this fine to Christiansen and transferred the remainder as Swiss francs to Switzerland. Challenged about this on December 22, 1945, Göring dismissed it as "nonsense" and pointed out that "Krischan" came directly under the high command, not the air force.

Scene

and his manhood at the wheel of a sports car on Hitler's autobahns, every moment of this confinement hurt. He was wasting away. Front and profile mugshots taken on June 22 show him glowering and drawn. On July 10, similar photographs show the cheekbones protruding almost like when he was a young lieutenant in the Richthofen Squadron. But he was still defiant. "Except for a considerable loss in weight," the interrogators reported after seeing him on the seventh, "Göring's detention has not affected him very visibly. He is . . . very wary. Göring knows that we are trying to convict him of something, but he is not quite sure what that is."

The commandant, Colonel Andrus, ordered the paracodeine dosage reduced. On July 19, Göring counted the pills, noticed there were only sixteen, and complained, "Each day less and less." A German doctor had by now been introduced to the prisoners—Dr. Ludwig Pflücker, a mild-mannered urologist of the type that Göring had often noticed at health spas. Göring complained of headaches, and asked for a sedative. Pflücker, avoiding problems, applied heat therapy instead.

"Send up Fat Stuff!" The cry became routine that July and August in Mondorf, and Göring would attempt a pixie smile as he loped off to the interview room between two guards. On July 19 and 20, 1945, several U.S. Army historians came to talk with him. Their chief, Dr. George N. Shuster, had no axe to grind and allowed him free rein in venting his spleen about Hitler and Bormann. "Once," reminisced Göring, "we had to make four thousand phone calls to answer one single question from the Führer"—he still called Hitler that—"about an airplane engine." His real *bête noire* was Martin Bormann. "I can't conceal that Bormann was the Führer's evil genius, and I couldn't wish anything sweeter than to shoot the dog down myself. I haven't the slightest doubt that there would have been a reconciliation between the Führer and myself once we had begun winning in the air again."

To Kenneth W. Hechler, one of Shuster's team, such an interview was like reeling in a big fish—playing out just enough line to bring him in eventually. "*Morgen, Herr Reichsmarschall!*" he would greet him ingratiatingly, and listen with apparent sincerity to Göring's recital of the humiliations he was suffering and his role in the 1940 Nazi victories in France. Once Hechler tried to ask about the far more interesting 1944 Ardennes offensive, but Göring began by comparing it at length to the great Nazi lunge through Sedan in 1940 and never reached 1944 in his narrative.

"Göring," the interrogators warned on July 17, "has the happy faculty of believing his own fabrications, which upon repetition become more and more plausible to him." Hechler found he could detect when Göring was about to tell a whopper. His smile twisted, his words became more guttural, his hands swept fractionally wider; he tossed in more humorous quips too, as though to throw dust in his interrogators' eyes.

"If we had not invaded Normandy," he asked, "do you think you could have beaten Russia?"

Göring leaned forward and whispered in mock confidence that if Eisenhower had given his *personal* guarantee, the Germans would have socked the Soviets so hard that they would have seen the sun (he jabbed one finger skyward), the moon (another jab), and the stars (a whole galaxy of jabs). Hechler roared with laughter.

That Monday, July 23, a Soviet officers' commission arrived. Bellowing, "The Russians are coming!" Göring vanished into his cell. The next day he saw them nonetheless, and Hechler heard the Russians screaming at him.

Suddenly [wrote Hechler four years later in a private memoir] I heard Göring starting to answer the interrogators. I couldn't distinguish what he was saying, but it was interrupted repeatedly by chuckles from the Russians. Soon Göring's voice rose, and the chuckles swelled to roars of laughter. For two hours the noise of guffaws echoed down the halls, and then the Russians came out slapping each other on the back.

Afterward, Göring came in to see the major and hitched up his baggy pants with a swagger. "I really had those Russkies rolling in the aisles, didn't I!"

Undoubtedly Fat Stuff was coming back fighting, and the Americans only had themselves to blame. On July 23, 1945, Colonel Andrus recorded a further cut in the paracodeine dosage. "He looks very good, is losing much weight [and] has apparently no other ill effects—except that he would like to get larger doses."

He still worked off his old grievances. He told Ribbentrop impolitely where he could file an eighty-five-page memorandum he had just composed. He still insisted that *he* was Hitler's surrogate, and nobody else. "Dönitz," he complained once more to Shuster on the twenty-third, "just took command on the basis of a radio message that was never confirmed in writing. Bormann signed it 'p.p. the Führer.'"

He had shed seventeen pounds already and was still losing weight. By July 26, his dosage had been cut to fifteen pills. Andrus noticed his disgust at "being short-changed," but that was all. On August 4, the colonel reported, "Göring states that his health is better now than it has been for years." He explained to his superiors, "It is our purpose not only to keep Göring well, but to eliminate any possible bar to trial or punishment."

Göring had already made the simple decision that eluded his co-defendants in the coming trial: to die like a man. He had never been afraid of death. As a lad, he had stood his ground when an Austrian avalanche had crashed around him. "The true German," he had sermonized to his staff on November 25, 1944, "faces up to the ultimate sacrifice with a certain sovereignty and peace of mind. . . . For me, life on this planet has just been an intermission

during which I have had to perform as best I could. No more, and no less. . . . The devil take it, before I allow any man to drag me down and make me grovel just to cling on to this tattered thing called life!"

On August 5, the U.S. Army sent to SHAEF headquarters the formal list of prisoners to be turned over to the control of prosecuting counsel. Göring's name headed the list. He had become number-one man in Nazi Germany at last. Five days later his paracodeine medication was stopped for good.

Unwell once again, he remained upstairs in the Grand Hotel, suffering the old heart trouble, while his more fortunate fellow prisoners were mustered and left. All came to say their farewells except for two Staatssekretäre who churlishly refused. Dönitz's adjutant was the last to come up. Göring received him esconced at the head of his bed in a heap of blankets that he had contrived to convert into a kind of throne, as though sitting in the high chair at Carinhall. The naval officer could see he was in a brilliant mood, having obviously found his old form and vitality. "Whatever happens," the Reichsmarschall promised him, with the glint of coming battle in his eye, "you can count on me. There're one or two things I'm going to say at the coming trial."

That afternoon, August 12, 1945, an American C-47 transport plane flew him from Luxembourg to Nuremberg. Perhaps unaware that it was to be the last airplane journey of his life, he thoroughly enjoyed the trip and chattered keenly about the flight. "His health is probably not very good," warned an American officer three days later, "and on two recent occasions he was to be found in his dressing gown and pajamas in bed, as a result first of a slight heart attack and . . . bronchitis."

Nuremberg was a landscape of ruins surrounding the Palace of Justice and its adjoining detention block. The cells were low-ceilinged cubicles barely thirteen feet by seven. Göring would sleep on a metal cot bolted to the floor along the left wall. Just to the right of the narrow doorway a porcelain toilet bowl was set in an alcove to afford minimal privacy. As his eyes took in the fresh plaster patches where iron hooks had been ripped out of the wall, the lack of electric wiring, and the Perspex freshly installed in the tiny windows high up the end wall, he must have smiled. He had no intention of ducking out of this last battle prematurely. He placed his few possessions on the little table—so flimsy that no prisoner, let alone a Hermann Göring, could stand on it—with pride of place going to a snapshot of Edda. "Dear Daddy," she had written on the back, "come back to me again soon. I have such longing for you. Many thousand kisses from your Edda!!!!"

Tight security precautions were also taken with medication. Pflücker injected daily Vitamin B and provided Seconal tablets to help him sleep despite the harsh new jail regime. Tormented by rheumatism, Göring was also occasionally allowed one aspirin, but he was watched to ensure that he swallowed it.

Colonel Andrus had ordered pencils and paper provided so that the pris-

oners could write private letters. These, Andrus reported, were "promptly sent to the chief of interrogation," Colonel John H. Amen.

One of Göring's first letters was to Helga Bouhler:

Dear Heli!

As I don't know where Emmy and Edda are, please tell me their address if you know it. Are they still at Fischhorn? How are things with you? Where is Ango? Not very much I can tell you, we've all just got to grin and bear it. But I wish you all the best from the bottom of my heart.

Andrus could not have forwarded this letter even had he wanted to. "Ango" Bouhler had taken cyanide in U.S. captivity, and Helga had leaped to her death from a high window at Fischhorn.

The Americans pocketed these early letters and sold them off privately years later.

Of course, the prisoners were puzzled about the lack of any response. "We've been permitted to write letters and postcards for two months," wrote Keitel on October 10, "but no replies have been received.

Göring's blue luggage had been stowed in a baggage room to which only a few named officers held the key. "There was one item," Andrus would insist later, "that belonged to Göring which he was never allowed to go into, and that was a vanity case containing bottles, jars, nail file, scissors, etc. To the best of my knowledge this vanity case was never opened until it was searched for some salve"—a search that was a consequence, in fact, of the last posthumous shaft that Göring would loose off at the colonel, his detested jailer.

At the end of August 1945 Andrus asked Pflücker why the prisoners' condition was deteriorating, and the doctor pointed to the poor food and lack of human contact (so he testified to the later board of inquiry): "The colonel ordered better food. I was permitted to speak to the prisoners more."

He testified further that Göring suffered frequent heart attacks.

"I am not a heart specialist," he warned the colonel. "I have no heart instruments to make a proper examination."

The daily routine began at 7:00 A.M. with a prison trusty handing breakfast and a spoon through the Judas hole in Göring's cell door. A barber came and shaved him while a truncheon-wielding sentry ensured that no words were exchanged. "Sentinels moving back and forth on the catwalks," Andrus reassured Justice Robert H. Jackson, the chief American prosecutor, "view the prisoners every half minute." By five-thirty it was dark. At 6:00 P.M. he was given supper. His eyeglasses, pen, and wristwatch were taken away, and the cell light turned off at 9:30 P.M.; a spotlight then beamed through the hole in the door onto his face all night.

There was one episode on August 21 that suggests that Göring's health was indeed less robust than people believed. At 3:00 P.M. that day American officers performed the (wholly meaningless) ritual of discharging him from the German armed forces in an upstairs interrogation room, and he suffered yet another heart attack after being marched up the three flights of stairs. He was short of breath and exhausted when returned to his cell at 4:00 P.M., and complained of heart pains. The crisis lasted all night. His heart action became irregular, his pulse increased. An American army doctor administered a cardiac drug and phenobarbital both then and at 11:00 P.M. Attributing this crisis to the exertion as well as the ugly implications of the "discharge" charade, the American doctor ordered the Reichsmarschall to bed for two days. He confidentially warned Andrus that unless their prize captive was allowed thirty minutes of exercise outdoors each day, the next heart attack might be Göring's last.

The interrogations resumed, this time on a different tangent. Several times a week armed sentries handcuffed him and marched him down the stairs and along the covered catwalks to the interrogation rooms on the second floor of the Palace of Justice. Meetings with Allied questioners were conducted face to face across an open table. But to consult with his own counsel (the insipid, prim former patent and labor attorney Dr. Otto Stahmer had been assigned to him), he was taken behind a partition with windshield glass to bar any physical contact. Documents were passed through a slide after a sentinel had sniffed them to make sure they were not steeped in poison.

On August 28, Colonel Amen grilled him about Hitler's aggressive plans against Austria, Czechoslovakia, and Russia. "Considering that it is eight years ago," Göring said, playing for time, "it is almost impossible for me to pin down what the Führer said in 1937." He refused to co-sign the transcripts, thereby rendering them useless. Questioned on October 3 about allegations that the German Aviators' Club had paid Major Alexander Löhr 5 million Reichsmarks for information about the Austrian Air Force, he laughed incredulously. The Austrian Air Force had only one squadron, he pointed out. "I would probably have told him that for five schillings I would give *him* all the intelligence he needed about his own air force!" Asked by the humorless Amen on the eighth about alleged links between his Reich Forestry Administration and plans for a postwar Nazi guerrilla movement, Göring retorted with a grin that he couldn't imagine "what they could have done with my trees." Five days later Kempner took over the interrogation and claimed that both Diels and Gritzbach had incriminated Göring in the Reichstag fire. Göring called his bluff, demanding to be confronted with the two supposed witnesses. Kempner meekly put the allegations away.

Göring was worried about the silence surrounding his wife and daughter. On October 12, Dr. Douglas M. Kelley, the junior prison psychiatrist, took a letter to Emmy at Neuhaus, near Veldenstein. She asked him how Hermann

was. "As firm as a rock in a raging sea," was the kind reply. She wrote him on the thirteenth and fourteenth, but the letters were not delivered.

To turn the psychological screw on the defendants, their families were now arrested. Even Göring's indignant brother Albert, whom American Special Intelligence had only recently contemplated using as an agent, was incarcerated. At 11:30 A.M. on October 15, Paul H. Goldenberg of the CIC arrested Emmy together with her niece, sister, and the nurse Christa Gormanns. The women were imprisoned in Straubing Jail, and Edda was put in an orphanage.

On October 19, Colonel Amen served the formal indictment on Göring. The transcript shows that he asked only for a trustworthy interpreter and an interview with his old lawyer, Hans Frank. But Frank was in the same boat as Göring now. Others proved more fragile, under this mounting pressure. Ley went insane and strangled himself with a wet towel on October 25. Göring expressed heartless satisfaction. "It's just as well," he told the psychiatrist, "because I had my doubts about how he would behave at the trial." He detected signs that Ribbentrop was cracking up too. "I'm not afraid of the soldiers," Göring remarked. "They'll behave themselves."

After Ley's suicide, Andrus redoubled the security precautions. Göring was repeatedly strip-searched, his private effects were picked through zealously, and he was often moved without warning to a different cell. Asked by Andrus to report, the new psychiatrist Dr. Gustave M. Gilbert assured the commandant that Göring was a very low suicide risk. At 138 Göring's I.Q. was inferior only to Hjalmar Schacht's (143) and Arthur Seyss-Inquart's (141). In fact, Göring's morale was so high that he was likely to prove their most troublesome defendant. When Gilbert remarked that the German public now openly regretted that the attempt on Hitler's life had failed, Göring roared at him. "Never mind what the people say *now*! I know what they said before! I know how they cheered when the going was good."

He looked forward to the trial with undisguised relish. "I can answer for anything I have done," he told Gilbert on November 11, but he added uneasily, "I can't answer for anything I haven't done." And he concluded, "I know what is in store for me."

That day he wrote a farewell letter to Emmy—just in case—and signed a new will. He handed the will to Otto Stahmer. The attorney revealed now that Emmy was being held in prison. Tears in his eyes, the Reichsmarschall told the other prisoners, "You see, the Americans are just as bad as the Gestapo. What have women and children got to do with this?"

On the nineteenth, he wrote Emmy a letter:

My dearest,

Major Kelley still has the last letter I wrote you. If you've got back to Edda at Neuhaus, he'll drive out to give you the letter. . . .

If you're not back at Neuhaus, another letter will go to you at the [Straubing prison] camp. . . .

The Nuremberg Trial began formally the next day, November 20, 1945. Quietly regretting that he had to share the limelight with crackpots and criminals, Hermann Göring asked for permission to get a change of uniform from his baggage. He wanted to make a neat impression in the courtroom.

44 ON TRIAL

As Reichsmarschall of the Greater German Reich, I assume political responsibility for my own acts."

Thus Göring began the written declaration that he had planned to read out as the trial began on November 20, 1945. "Although answerable for these acts only to the German people and to the German courts," the statement continued, "I am nevertheless willing without recognizing the jurisdiction of this Tribunal, to provide it with any explanations that are desired and to speak the whole truth. I do however . . . refuse to accept responsibility for acts committed by others—acts of which I was unaware and which I would not have approved of or been able to prevent had I known of them. Hermann Göring."

Justice Robert H. Jackson, the U.S. chief prosecutor, had always regarded Göring as his principal adversary in the coming trial. They came from different worlds—the "Renaissance" figure from the bomb-devastated land of political assassins and military gangsters would be jousting with the wing-collared East Coast representative of the neat-lawned legal democracies. Jackson was a brave champion of human rights. It was he who had fought for a tribunal in the first place, whereas Roosevelt and Churchill had argued

alike for a "political solution"—the liquidation of Göring and his consorts without even the pretense of a trial.

As Göring took his prominent place at the front and right-hand end of the dock, Jackson studied his face intently. He realized that so long as this Nazi leader did not choose to upset the procedure, none of the others would.

Called upon now to enter his plea of Guilty or Not Guilty, Göring stepped to the microphone, clutching his proposed declaration. "Before I answer—" he began.

The British presiding judge, Sir Geoffrey Lawrence, interrupted him. Göring doggedly began again, and Jackson caught his breath. But Lawrence firmly halted the defendant.

Göring murmured, "Not Guilty," adding quickly, "in the sense of the indictment." His declaration remained unread.

After the charges had been read out, Jackson opened the prosecution case with a major speech describing the Nazi crimes that had killed an estimated 5.7 million Jews. During the adjournment, somebody asked who had ordered these things, and Göring said, "Himmler, I suppose."

He was uncomfortable. "The German people will forever be condemned for these brutalities." He strove to achieve a monolithic defensive front, but these atrocities rendered that almost impossible.

On November 29, the court rang with laughter as his boisterous phone conversations with Ribbentrop and Prince Philipp during the Austria crisis of March 1938 were read out. But his pleasurable nostalgia was poisoned as awful film sequences were shown that afternoon of scenes in the concentration camps. "It just spoiled everything," he complained to Dr. Gilbert. Worse followed on the last day of the month. A prosecution witness, General Erwin Lahousen, the Abwehr department chief responsible for subversion and sabotage operations, described his own acts of treachery against Hitler. "That traitor!" thundered Göring during the lunch adjournment. "That's one we overlooked on the twentieth of July. Hitler was right—the Abwehr was a traitor's organization. No wonder we lost the war!"

The possibility of bribing somebody to help him was never far from Göring's mind. He eyed the American guard officers in particular. Probably it surprised—even annoyed—him that they were not of the highest caliber. (Colonel Andrus repeatedly complained of their low standard, in letters to his superiors.) But in Germany the Nazis had had the same problem. In 1944 the Reichsmarschall had urged Hitler to provide better guards for the Allied prisoners of war than the "old Santa Clauses" then being used. "You see," he reminisced in a revealing moment to Colonel Amen, "those prisoners received a large number of Red Cross parcels . . . with chocolate and food, and they were very successful in bribing the guards."

Somehow, Göring struck up a friendship with Lieutenant Jack G. Wheelis. A hard-drinking six-foot-two Texan, Wheelis impressed Göring for two rea-

sons: He was an impassioned huntsman, and he held one key to the baggage room. Göring was photographed next to him, showing him a sheaf of papers; he signed one photo, as "Reichsjägermeister," dedicated it to "The Great Huntsman from Texas," and gave it to Wheelis.

Who can say what emotions seized the U.S. Army lieutenant? Perhaps it was pity for the caged lion. He agreed to carry letters to Emmy and little Edda—who had joined her mother in Straubing Jail on November 24. Göring rewarded these favors with gifts of valuables, presenting to Wheelis the solid-gold Mont Blanc fountain pen and Swiss wristwatch engraved with his signature, the gold cigarette case that Goebbels had given him, and the gray suede gloves he had worn at Augsburg. Somehow Göring retrieved from the locked baggage room other valuables like his gold epaulets and a swastika-embossed gold matchbook cover, and used them to reward other American officers.

It was indeed the Last Battle, albeit on a minuscule scale, and each side used its own dirty tricks. A Jew who had fled Germany before the war, the psychiatrist Dr. Gilbert overrode the dictates of medical ethics to submit to the prosecution team regular notes on what he had overheard. Then prosecutor Jackson would telegraph this intelligence to Washington, as his papers show. "Göring's defense against proposal to seize Atlantic islands for war against United States," read one Jackson wire, "apparently is that Roosevelt speeches indicated attack from us. . . . Also reported Göring will testify to statements by Bullitt and Davies [the American Ambassadors William C. Bullitt and Joseph Davies] in support of Roosevelt threat of aggression against Germany."

Cynical and realistic alike, Göring declared to Gilbert that the victors would always be the judges. "He constantly drums into the others the idea that Germany was a sovereign state, Hitler a sovereign ruler, and the court has no jurisdiction." Commenting on the charge of waging "aggressive war," Göring maintained that Britain, America, and Russia had all done the same. "But when Germany does it, it becomes a crime—because we lost!" Aware of Churchill's own plans to invade neutral Norway and Sweden, which the Germans had learned about from documents captured in 1940, defense counsel for Keitel, Jodl, and Göring all challenged the British government to produce the relevant telegrams. Their request caused acute embarrassment to the new, left-wing foreign secretary, Ernest Bevin, in London. Sir Norman Brooke, the British Cabinet's secretary, agreed that the defense's allegation about Churchill was true but warned against allowing the production of isolated documents at Nuremberg—"especially when we do not know precisely what captured [British] documents the other side may have."

In this unequal battle the Reichsmarschall's only supporters were Rosenberg and Ribbentrop. ~~Former Nazi youth leader Baldur von Schirach was~~ wavering, reported Dr. Gilbert, and Field Marshal Keitel was "afraid to talk up." The psychiatrist advised Jackson to concentrate on winning over banker Hjalmar Schacht and Hitler's young arms minister Albert Speer, using two

chinks in the Reichsmarschall's armor—the Nazi atrocities, and his acquisition of art treasures. “They spoil his pose as a hero-patriot and model officer.”

The damning evidence of the concentration-camp atrocities flabbergasted Göring. “I still can't grasp all those things,” he admitted. “Do you suppose I'd have believed it if somebody came to me and said they were making freezing experiments on human guinea pigs, or that people were forced to dig their own graves and be mowed down by the thousands? I would have just said, ‘Get the hell out of here with that fantastic nonsense.’”

The Nazi newsreel film of people's court judge Roland Freisler screaming at once-respectable general staff plotters turned Göring's stomach. But when the psychiatrist mentioned Röhm, Göring erupted about the “dirty homosexual swine” and angrily paced his tiny cell in shirt sleeves and slippers. “It was a damned good thing I wiped them out,” he roared. “Or they would have wiped us out!”

Two days before Christmas Gilbert found him brooding on the future. What was his own fate compared to such a tide of history? “If I have to die,” he pondered out loud, “then I'd rather die as a martyr than a traitor.” He brightened, and said, “Don't forget that the great conquerors of history are not seen as murderers—Ghenghis Khan, Peter the Great, Frederick the Great!” Five years hence, he predicted, Hitler would be the idol of Germany again, and with a rueful laugh he invited Gilbert to mark his prophecy.

The new year, 1946, began with fresh unpleasantness for Göring. SS General Otto Ohlendorf testified on January 3 with apparent sincerity about mass liquidations that he had himself directed; worse, that afternoon Speer's defense attorney calmly invited the SS officer to testify whether he was aware that Speer had plotted to kill Hitler.

Göring choked. A major breach was appearing in the defense front line. He flounced over to the ex-minister as the session ended, but Speer pointedly ignored him.

“*Gott im Himmel!*” Göring exclaimed to Gilbert that evening. “I nearly died of shame. To think that a German could be so rotten, just to prolong his wretched life—to put it crudely, to piss in front and crap behind a little longer. Herrgott! Donnerwetter! For myself,” he barked, “I don't care if I get executed. . . . But there is still such a thing as honor.”

A few days later, on January 12, Colonel Andrus heard from Gilbert of the uproar among the prisoners caused by the arrest of their next of kin by the CIC. Andrus had little sympathy for the CIC officers, most of whom had only recently been German citizens themselves. “Göring's wife,” he protested in a secret letter to the tribunal, “was reported to have been arrested and the child taken from her. . . . She has not written to him and it may be that she is not permitted to do so.” Fearing that the defendants might bring this painful matter up in open court, “which would place the Americans on the defensive,” Andrus demanded that the womenfolk be released at once.

That day, his final birthday, Göring also complained to the tribunal, writing in longhand to Judge Lawrence that he had received only three letters from Emmy and Edda since his capture and asking the tribunal to order the authorities to allow them to exchange letters again.

Before my voluntary surrender to American custody [he explained] I wrote asking General Eisenhower to take care of my family. Upon arrival at Seventh Army headquarters (General Patch) I was expressly promised that my request would be honored. My wife, daughter, relatives, and next of kin were taken to Veldenstein Castle, my family property north of Nuremberg, and interned there. They were able to move around the castle freely, though isolated from the outside world, which was very satisfactory to me.

But since their arrest on October 15, he complained, neither his wife nor daughter had been allowed to write to him.

Evidently in consequence of this complaint, the American chaplain, Henry F. Gerecke, a fifty-four year old Lutheran from Wisconsin who spoke fluent German, visited Emmy at Straubing. Afterward, Göring wrote to her, using prisoner-of-war notepaper:

My darling Emmy!

Yesterday the chaplain came back from visiting you and brought me your good wishes. How very happy they made me, thank you. Now I am feeling calmer.

It's obvious why you're all in custody—just because you are mine. As the Führer is dead, I am the No. 1 principal war criminal, and you are my relatives. The hatred and the thirst for revenge—you can imagine whose—are boundless. . . . But I am not going to let them bend or break me. . . .

How often I go to you in my thoughts and try to imagine the life you are leading! Have you enough books? My treasure, I cannot express how much I love you. You and Edda have always been my pride and joy. I am filled with gratitude to you both. Regards to Else, Ellen [Kiurina], and faithful [nurse] Christa. Why on earth did they arrest Christa?

She sent him a four-leaf clover for good luck. It was removed before Göring got the letter, but he thanked her all the same. "Luck—ours has run out now," he commented. They now allowed him to write one letter and one postcard each week.

You know how unutterably it hurts [he wrote] to know that you, my only beloved, are suffering all of this because of me! Just

because you are my wife you have to suffer this persecution. You only did good to people, but what does that matter? You are my wife, and that's enough.

I wanted to bring you happiness forever, but I brought you misfortune. And yet you know how immense is my love for you and how much I long for you. I am keeping my chin up although things are looking grim. Greetings to Else and everybody. Kiss my little Edda. A big hug and kisses, and endless love, from your Hermann.

"Day and night," he wrote in another letter, "two eyes stare at me through the porthole in the cell door. A spotlight shines on me all night. . . . Your letters are the only sunshine in my life."

On the last day of February 1946, Emmy and Edda left Straubing Jail. They were permitted to move into a cottage deep in the forest at Sackdilling, near Veldenstein. The cottage had neither water nor electricity, but it was home. Once or twice Jackson's oily ex-German aide Kempner called on them out there. Edda, grave and unsmiling, declined the oranges that he offered.

"You will see," Göring predicted to Dr. Gilbert that month. "This trial will be a disgrace in fifteen years' time." A few days later Field Marshal Paulus took the witness stand. Acting now as a witness for the Russian prosecution team, the former Stalingrad commander testified that Hitler had begun planning *Barbarossa* in 1940. "Ask that dirty swine if he knows he's a traitor," shouted Göring to his defense attorney, Stahmer. But it was Himmler's murder operations that still haunted Göring. "Anybody can make an atrocity film," he sniffed on February 15, "if they take corpses out of their graves and then show a tractor shoving them back in again."

Over lunch he scurried to repair the breaches torn in their front line by Speer's self-serving "treachery," bullying the other defendants like a sheep-dog chasing errant sheep. He urged the craven homosexual Walter Funk to stop worrying about death—in fifty years' time Germany would recognize them all as martyrs and heroes, and they would put his (Göring's) cadaver into a marble mausoleum like Napoleon's. Alerted by Gilbert to Göring's intensive canvassing, Jackson persuaded Sir David Maxwell-Fyfe, the British prosecutor, to agree to Göring's being isolated over lunch. Dr. Gilbert himself drafted the new seating plan: Göring would sit in a cold, dim room for lunch alone, separated from the other twenty defendants. The order went into force at lunchtime on February 18. Speer crowed, Gilbert found Göring dejected and tremulous like a rejected child. In the even greater solitude of his cell, later that day the Reichsmarschall came close to contrition. "Don't think," he pleaded to Gilbert, "that I don't reproach myself in the

loneliness of this cell for not having lived my life differently, instead of coming to this end."

"Effect of separating defendants & isolating Göring marked," reported Gilbert to Jackson, "and on the whole favorable for trial."

On the twentieth, the court was shown a Soviet-made atrocity film. As the images of torture instruments, mutilated bodies, guillotines, and baskets of decapitated heads flickered and danced across the movie screen on the far wall to their left, Göring yawned demonstratively. "They could just as easily have killed a few hundred German prisoners of war and put them into Russian uniforms for the atrocity picture," he scoffed to Kelley's successor, Major Leo N. Goldensohn, that evening. "You don't know the Russians the way I do!" He shrewdly pointed out that the corpses had obviously been filmed before rigor mortis had had time to set in. "It is not that atrocity films leave me stone cold," he felt compelled to explain to Dr. Gilbert a few days afterward. "But I have seen so much already . . . women and children burned alive in air raids." Embroidering on the facts, he continued, "All that [Hans Fritzsche] had to do was *broadcast* that Berlin or Dresden had suffered another terror raid. But I went and *saw* the corpses—sometimes still burning—because I was air minister." When a woman who claimed to be an Auschwitz survivor started a moving testimony (the American judge Francis Biddle wrote, "This I doubt," in his diary), Göring took off his earphones in disgust. "The higher up you were," he explained to Dönitz's attorney as they rose for the adjournment, "the less you saw of what was going on."

Göring was now back in his physical prime. On March 6, 1946, as he passed Field Marshal Milch in a corridor, they exchanged illicit salutes, and Milch noted in his diary that the Reichsmarschall was fitter and slimmer than he had ever seen him before. It boded ill for Jackson and the prosecution.

On Friday the eighth, the defense called Bodenschatz into the box. Jackson made mincemeat of the servile, elderly general, and Göring felt sorry for him. "Wait till he starts on *me*," he boasted, as he accepted a cigarette from Dr. Gilbert with trembling fingers. Milch followed Bodenschatz to the microphone that afternoon, and Göring murmured to his counsel, "Now I'm for it—we weren't on the best of terms." But the field marshal, despite a clumsy attempt at blackmail by Major Englander in November, did his best for Göring.

Sworn in [Milch recorded in his diary], everybody wearing ear-phones; then examination by attorney Stahmer. . . . When I was asked about Göring's attitude to prisoners of war Jackson interrupted, "We've shown enough patience, but this is going too far. I object!"

The Tribunal sustained his objection and poor Stahmer, somewhat confused, asked me one more short question and sat down. . . .

An hour later the court adjourned for the weekend. "The defendants were mostly very crushed," Milch described. "When I saw Jodl being led away, his eyes were filled with tears."

That Saturday morning Göring lay in bed, fully clothed, brooding. "Knowing what I know now," he confided to Gilbert in a low, serious voice. "I wish I could have Himmler here—just for ten minutes—to ask him what on earth he was up to out there."

For a few more days he was compelled to listen. On Monday, March 11, Jackson cross-examined Milch. The field marshal now put up a stout defense of Göring—whom he had only three weeks before raged at in his private diary as "this idiot . . . this antique dealer and yellow-belly." *The Times* of London, reporting on his testimony, complained, "For nearly five hours he was engaged in a battle of wits in which the prosecution was apparently at such pains to discredit his evidence that it often seemed that Milch, rather than Göring, was the accused man." (Reading these lines, Milch bragged in his diary, "I must have knocked their plans into a cocked hat!") "Unless means is found," warned the British newspaper, "of keeping witnesses to the point, the Nuremberg defense will become an opportunity for Nazi polemics and false trails." Displeased with the stocky field marshal, the American Army tossed him into their notorious punishment bunker at the Dachau concentration camp a few days later, as a warning to others who still had to testify.

On March 13, 1946, the five months of enforced silence were over. There was not an empty seat in the courtroom as Göring took the stand. Unable to control his trembling hands, he glared at the microphone and newsreel cameras. Jackson knew that the next hours would make or break one or the other of them—perhaps both. He anticipated that the Reichsmarschall might appeal over the heads of the tribunal to the confused and baffled German public. The trial might even fuel renewed anti-Semitism and pro-Nazi sentiments.

The tall, red-faced British judge, Sir Normann Birkett, wrote in his private manuscript on the trial that Göring was the man who really dominated the proceedings. He had followed the evidence with great intentness when the evidence required it, and had slept like an infant when it did not. Nobody, reflected Birkett, seemed to have been quite prepared for Göring's immense ability and knowledge, or for his mastery and understanding of the captured documents.

Göring was stripped of his finery but still noble in manner and now handsome in feature once again. As he began to speak—hoping that somewhere, out there in the depths of the Bavarian forest, Emmy and Edda might be listening to his voice—he gained in confidence and assurance with each answer. Even Speer was moved by the spectacle as this lion of a man fought back. He began to pump out resonant oratory, scattering immortal lines before this last arbitrary tribunal of mortal enemies. He embellished his replies with

repartee, attracting gales of laughter from the public in the courtroom, then subtly hushed the listeners with some throwaway self-incrimination of apparent sincerity.

Millions of listeners around the world were hearing the trial broadcast. It was relayed by loudspeaker over prison camps all over Germany, the United States, and Britain. The effect was not what the victors had desired at all. Meals halted, the prisoners poured outside to listen, as Hermann—"Just Hermann! Never anything but Hermann!"—began this last battle for his country. In the courtroom itself the newspapermen were stunned by his performance—they had swallowed their own reports, believing, as Jackson wryly commented later, that the Reichsmarschall was indeed a dope fiend, a physical wreck, a neurotic.

Too excited to eat, he sat on his cot afterward, unwinding; he smoked his long meerschaum pipe, and held out an arm to Dr. Gilbert to show how steady he now was. He had mapped the broad outlines first, while digging in for the main attack, so he explained. He ruminated out loud about man as the world's most fearsome beast of prey, and about the inevitability of war. Perhaps, reflected Gilbert, the great music of Richard Wagner's *Götterdämmerung* was pounding through the chords of his brain; more likely, the Reichsmarschall's mind was prowling on ahead to the moment when he, the beast of prey, would liberate himself from this earthly cage.

On the next day, March 14, he testified with frankness and candor on how he had consolidated the Nazi stranglehold on Germany, and once more made no bones of his role in the Röhm massacre. Gilbert asked him, as they adjourned for lunch, what he proposed to say about the SS atrocities.

Göring threw him an uneasy look. "That I didn't take the rumors seriously," he said.

Once that afternoon he noticed the American judge, John J. Parker, nodding affably to him, and he knew that he was making headway.

"Now you see why he was so popular," lamented Schirach to Dr. Gilbert.

"That Göring is quite a guy," said Speer's attorney admiringly. "A Mordsker! [a real killer]!"

Chagrined, Speer expressed the wan hope that Justice Jackson would "show him up" when his cross-examination began.

That historic duel began on Monday, March 18. Göring stepped into the box, his hair slicked back, his eyes gleaming with insolent defiance. He sensed that the terms of trade were in his favor, and indeed they were. Accustomed to the U.S. district courts—to harrying and crowding hostile witnesses—Jackson was out of his depth at Nuremberg. Here, he would have to wait while each question and response was ponderously translated into the trial's four official languages. Göring had a good grasp of English; not only did Jackson have no command whatever of German, but more than once he was extremely embarrassed by the faulty translation of documents that he had submitted as key exhibits.

His original plan had been to deflate Göring by asking about his anti-Jewish decrees and art collection. Fatally, he changed his mind at the last moment and leveled the more general political accusations first. He found to his consternation that Göring, far from denying these charges, went way beyond mere admissions in his answers. No, he had always *intended* to overthrow the Weimar republic, to end parliamentary government in Germany, and to suppress the opposition! Once, when he launched into yet another long discourse, Jackson ordered him to answer yes or no. Too late, he saw the American judge, Parker, lean over and whisper something to the president, Lawrence. "Mr. Justice Jackson," interrupted the latter, "the tribunal feels that the witness should be allowed to make whatever explanation he cares to make in answer to this question."

Jackson blushed. Grinning broadly at Jackson's humiliation, Göring continued.

Worse was now to come. Jackson challenged Göring on Tuesday, the nineteenth, about the extreme secrecy of the Nazis' planning. Göring smirked, and answered that he could not recall having seen the U.S. government *publish* details of its own mobilization plans. There was loud laughter. Jackson tore off his earphones and appealed to the judges for protection—in vain. "Göring's answer," he caviled to his learned colleagues afterward, "was impudent and argumentative and the court should have used its gavel."

There were extraordinary scenes at the prosecutors' secret meeting that night, as the shorthand record shows:

JACKSON: The arrogance of Göring in today's session supports what opponents of this Trial have always said: if you give these people a chance to speak they will propagandize and make it a farce.

When I objected to Göring's attitude [and] requested the Court to instruct him to answer responsively, [the American judge] whispered in the ear of the presiding judge, and thereupon the Court overruled me on its own motion without even hearing an objection from Göring's counsel.

If Göring is permitted to get away with this he will encourage all the defendants to do the same thing. I have never heard of such a rule for cross-examination. The witness should be compelled to answer the question and to reserve his explanations for later (re-direct). It is utterly impossible to cross-examine unless the Court controls the witnesses, and Göring knows he has the Court in his corner.

Quite openly sulking, Jackson proposed abandoning the cross-examination of Göring altogether. Maxwell-Fyfe was aghast. "To cease now," he interjected, "would be interpreted as a victory for Göring's obstructive tactics."

"Göring is being permitted to preach," objected Jackson. "He is becoming constantly more arrogant, and if this goes on it will do our countries more harm than good."

Maxwell-Fyfe agreed. "We must tell the court that we are dealing with an experienced politician. He will make the proceedings ridiculous unless the tribunal cooperates. The result will be that the trial is a disaster."

He recommended that they unofficially convey this to "our own judges." "The Allied Control Council, for instance," he continued, "is apprehensive lest Göring's examination-in-chief do a great deal of harm in restoring Nazi prestige."

"This," agreed Jackson, "is a critical point of the trial as far as achieving its objective is concerned." If this remark did not unmask the true, political face of the trial, Jackson's subsequent outburst did. "Göring is permitted to become a hero of the Nazis because he dares talk back to the United States. This wins him admiration from all the Nazis who remain in Germany, and he will influence the other defendants to do likewise. I almost felt this afternoon that it would have been wiser to have shot these men out of hand."

The British prosecutors were more fortunate than Jackson. Maxwell-Fyfe, an incisive, bullying barrister who would rise to the very pinnacles of the British legal establishment, brought beads of perspiration to Göring's brow over the Gestapo's execution of the escaped British aviators. When the Englishman asked if he was still loyal to Hitler despite the atrocities that had now come to light, Göring hesitated, recognizing the lethal burden of the question, then answered true to form—he believed in being loyal in times of hardship as well as in the more golden years. Most likely, he pointed out, the Führer had known as little of the atrocities as he himself had.

After that, the show ended rapidly. The Russian naïvely inquired why Göring had not refused to obey Hitler. "If I had," replied Göring with easy humor, "I certainly should not have had to worry about my health."

"If you handle yourselves half as well as I did," Göring bragged to the other defendants, resuming his place in the dock, "you'll be doing all right." It had thrilled him to see his own ability to withstand the taunt and thrust of his prosecutors without crumpling. "Don't forget," he reminded Dr. Gilbert in his cell some days afterward, "I had the best legal brains of Britain, America, Russia, and France arrayed against me. And there I was—alone!"

His bearing in the witness box had impressed friend and foe alike. Fan mail from Germany and abroad poured into the prison for Göring—letters reading, "Keep your chin up, Hermann," and "Good for you!" (He was not allowed to get them, of course.) "Göring had nothing to lose," Keitel's veteran attorney said in private, shortly before the final act. "That's why he played the part to the very end—with élan and shrewdness, and dialectically adept. He won round after round against Jackson, much to the glee of the other Americans. But he's as self-centered, vain, and pompous as ever."

Dr. Gilbert went out to see Emmy at Sackdilling, and returned on March

24—her birthday—with a letter from her and a postcard from Edda. Göring's letters to Emmy show, however, how the continued restraints and captivity were preying upon his nature. "I keep thinking about the onset of spring out there, bringing those wonderful woods alive," he wrote in one letter to Sackdilling. "You can imagine how I am seized by yearning for you—how I long to walk through this awakening forest with you. God protect you and Edda and you all! Although we have to be apart, believe me that my love and longing for you have never been greater." "My dearest," he wrote on another card to Emmy, "heartfelt thanks for yesterday's dear lines. I hope you're getting on and keeping together at Sackdilling—you, Edda, and Elses big and small. Today my counsel Dr. Stahmer is allowed to visit you. I trust him implicitly. Talk about everything with him. Best wishes to everybody at the cottage. You know how endless is my yearning, and how powerful my love for you. I hug you and kiss you all fondly. Your Hermann."

Then Wilhelm Frick's defense witness, the Abwehr/OSS double-agent Hans Bernd Gisevius, took the stand. Through his purposeful distortions, he did far more harm to Göring's case than good to Frick's. "In ten or twelve years," snorted Göring on April 25, "history will take an entirely different view of these traitors." Jackson was delighted, however, and thanked OSS chief Allen Dulles three days later for making Gisevius available. "[Gisevius] fulfilled the expectations stated in your letters," he added. "Göring is in a badly depressed state."

Despite threats from Göring, loudly uttered to Schacht's attorney, to get even, Schacht testified on May 3 that Göring used to appear dressed as the emperor Nero, wearing lipstick, rouge, and nail polish. (Göring hotly denied the lipstick, talking that evening with Dr. Gilbert.) Schacht was fighting to save his skin; but then Grand Admiral Dönitz testified, and he was fighting for Germany. "Now I am ready to listen to some more treason," said Göring, relieved, during the recess afterward. Schirach followed, and "sold out" like Speer; and these, Göring commented ironically, were both men whom their Führer had favored to the very end. "Rather die like a lion," he philosophized to Werner Bross, Stahmer's deputy, "than survive to scamper like a rabbit."

Die, yes—but not by the hangman's hand. Göring let it be known to Jackson that if guaranteed a firing squad he would give the prosecution some real dirt on Schacht. Jackson, foolishly as it turned out, did not heed him. Göring then intensified his contacts with the American Army's Lieutenant Wheelis. To make doubly sure, he evidently removed one wafer-thin metal diaphragm surreptitiously from his earphones in the courtroom. The loss was discovered and his cell minutely searched, but the sliver of metal was never found.

"My darling," he now wrote to Emmy. "Today the birthday letter for Edda goes off. So this week I can only send you a postcard. Heartfelt thanks for [letter] No. 19. What the newspapers are writing is a matter of supreme

indifference to us. Never let it get you down! I've been in bed for three days, sciatica in my right leg. Now I can understand what you must have been through. In passionate love, I hug and kiss you. Your Hermann."

The "birthday letter" to Edda has survived:

My darling, sweet child! My golden treasure!

Now's the second time that your birthday has come around and I can't be there. And yet, my darling, today I'm especially close to you, and send you my warmest and most heartfelt greetings.

I pray to Almighty God from the bottom of my heart to look after you and help you. I can't send you any gift, but my boundless love and longing is all around you and always shall be!

You know, my little sparrow, how fond I am of you! You are always so sweet and tender. You'll always be our happiness and joy.

Mama has told me what a brave little helper you are everywhere and how good you are being. I'm proud of you.

I hope the weather's fine so you can spend your birthday outside in the wonderful forest. My little sweetheart, once more all my warmest wishes for today and always: fondest hugs and kisses from your Papa.

The letters from them, he wrote to Emmy a few days later, in June 1946, were the "only ray of sunshine in my solitude." He went on:

So the darling child's birthday went off well after all. I thought it was going to be almost impossible for you to get hold of any present for Edda.

Just imagine: Ronny [probably his adjutant Ondarza] is in Hamburg but refusing to have anything at all to do with me, even a written statement. He hasn't even replied to Stahmer. There's gratitude! . . . I am in better health again. . . . In the prison yard three jasmine bushes are in blossom. You've realized my yearning to be out in the forest and breathe free air again. But even greater is my longing for you and Edda, and greater still my love. . . . Is Teske [Major Werner Teske, another adjutant] a free man?

He wondered if he would ever see Edda's golden curls again.

RELEASE

Allowed to make a closing address to the Nuremberg tribunal, Hermann Göring declared on August

31, 1946, "The German people trusted the Führer. Given his authoritarian direction of the state, they had no influence on events. Ignorant of the crimes of which we know today, the people have fought with loyalty, self-sacrifice, and courage, and they have suffered too in this life-and-death struggle into which they were arbitrarily thrust. The German people," he pronounced, "are free from blame."

Fighting here on their behalf, Göring had accepted blanket responsibility, and thereby rendered his last useful service to the German nation. By his execution—by firing squad, he confidently expected—he himself would expiate all crimes.

He expected no earthly reprieve. Because he had been number-two man to Hitler, the prosecution had attributed to him comprehensive knowledge of every crime in Nazi Germany. Thomas Dodd, one of Jackson's prosecuting staff, had alleged that Göring had directed Heydrich to kill the Jews and had ordered Allied airmen shot. To challenge the incriminating stenograms of his war conferences, Göring argued that the tribunal's own shorthand record showed how inaccurate such transcripts could be. As for the administrative

crimes of the Nazi forces in occupied Europe, Göring scoffed that these were no more criminal than those of the victors now—in suspending the Geneva Convention, dismantling industry, confiscating property, and enslaving millions of Germans.

A letter arrived from Edda, stamped CENSORED & PASSED—CENSOR, IMT. She had enclosed a pressed flower plucked from their forest.

My darling Daddy!

How happy I was when the chaplain visited us, he was kind and nice but sadly he couldn't stay long. Aunt Fanny [Carin's sister] and Aunt Erna were here too and brought me crayons and a coloring book and I was very happy. . . . Aunt Else brought me a few pictures, including one of you, that was the most beautiful present! . . . If only you could come here quickly and walk through the forest with me, how beautiful it would be!!! The forester's puppy is much bigger, I play with it all the time, it's so sweet.

Mama was sad she didn't hear you on the radio. I would have given up all my toys just to hear your voice. Mommy has told me she's going to be allowed to see you. I'd like to see you frightfully too. Can't I come as well? I'm *sooooo* fond of you and it's so awfully long since I saw you. Oh, Papa, if only I could come too!

Mommy has taught me almost the whole of [Friedrich Schiller's ballad] "The Bell," and I learned the rest by myself and recited it to Mommy and she was very pleased.

Aunt Thea sent us a packet with a bar of soap, two little candles, some cotton, four buttons, and a washcloth, we were very happy about that.

I promise you, Papa, that I always try to comfort Mommy and I'll always protect her. How much nicer it would be if you were there to protect us!!!

I pray every evening to dear God that Mommy and I can see you soon and give you a big hug.

Darling Papa, in my heart you are always right next to me and whenever I'm doing anything I tell myself you're looking on and that way I only do nice and good things.

Now I throw my little arms around your neck and give you a big kiss. Your Edda.

Emmy Göring implored the tribunal to let her see the imprisoned Reichsmarschall for a few minutes. "I haven't seen my husband for a year and a quarter," she wrote, "and I am longing so terribly for him that I don't see any way out. I need strength to carry on without my husband. A few minutes

when I could see him and hold his hand would help me no end. . . . My husband is very much worried about my child and myself, as we are without protection and help."

Softened by her solicitous feelings, the tribunal authorized the meeting. But for several more weeks Colonel Andrus disallowed it. Looking much thinner, she was finally allowed to come for half an hour on September 12, 1946. Hermann sat on the other side of the partition's glass window, handcuffed to a guard. He told her to write a list of things to say next time. "Otherwise we will forget too much that is of importance."

Five days later little Edda was led shyly in, unannounced. She was eight years old now. "Stand on a chair," commanded Hermann, weeping freely, "so I can see how you've grown." Edda recited the ballads that she had learned, and a famous poem containing the lines, "Above all, child, be loyal and true / And never, lips, be sullied by a lie." Göring tapped the glass and softly interrupted, "Yes, remember that, Edda: all your life long."

"Papa," she squeaked, "when you come home, will you please put on your rubber medals in the bath like people say you do?"

He never saw Edda again. When the world speculated how he had obtained the poison, later, she clasped her mother's hand and said, "I know! A window opened in the ceiling of his cell, and an angel of the Lord came down from heaven and gave it to him."

Since sentencing was postponed, the daily half-hour visits were continued. So near and yet, with the glass plate separating them, so far: He asked Emmy once what she did all day long (she was staying with the Stahmers) and she smiled. "For twenty-three and a half hours each day," she replied, "I look forward to seeing you." On September 29, the wives were ordered to leave Nuremberg. "Don't you believe," she pleaded at their last meeting now, "that we three shall, one day, be together in freedom?"

"I beg of you," Göring replied fervently, bending close to the glass, "give up hope."

As the sentinel led him away, he turned and called out, "Don't write anymore. I shan't either."

Judgment day, Tuesday, October 1, came. The execution team—four generals—had demanded privileged seats in the courtroom that day, but Jackson primly refused, arguing that it was always possible that there would be no death sentences whatever. More realistically, the world's newspapers published photographs of the chosen hangman, Master Sergeant John C. Woods, fingering his heavy hempen rope. Woods boasted that it would soon hang Hermann Göring.

Fifteen miles away, out at Sackdilling, Emmy and Else sent their little girls out to play in a forest glade, then clustered around the white portable radio set that an American girl had given them at the courthouse.

There, the president summed up the case against Göring first. The Reichs-

marschall watched gravely, shaking his head in barely perceptible disagreement. "His guilt is unique in its enormity," Sir Geoffrey Lawrence concluded. "The record discloses no excuses for this man. The court finds the defendant guilty on all four counts of the indictment."

Not a flicker of emotion had crossed Göring's brow. But when Biddle now announced Schacht's acquittal, he slammed down his earphones in disgust.

At 3:00 P.M. he stepped alone from the elevator at the courtroom's rear, to hear sentence. He came to attention, and Lawrence read it out, in the oddly disembodied voice of the English upper crust. "Defendant Hermann Wilhelm Göring, the International Military Court sentences you to death by hanging."

As he was led back to his cell, Göring was astonished to see *German* police mustering to rearrest Schacht and the other two who had been acquitted. He loathed Schacht now, but he gagged at the humiliating spectacle.

He found Dr. Gilbert hovering near his own cell door.

"Death," said Göring, reaching for the book that he had left on his cot. His eyes blurred, and he asked to be left alone.

The prisoners had been notified that they had four days to petition the Control Council for Germany for clemency, and that the hangings would take place fifteen days (excluding Sundays) after sentencing. Now that Göring was formally a condemned criminal, Andrus intensified security precautions—he wanted nothing, but nothing, to go wrong. He denied Göring all outside exercise, and he refused him permission to shower on the fourth and eleventh. Göring wrote two letters between the first and fifth: Andrus seized them both.* On the morning of the fifth, he ordered the straw pallette in Göring's cell changed without warning. He ordered the prisoner manacled to a cell guard and escorted during each of the remaining seven interviews over the next two weeks—Göring was taken to Room 55 on October 2 to sign papers, and then again to see his attorney on the 3rd and 4th as well as (finally) twice on the 5th, their 144th and 145th meetings.

He had instructed Stahmer not to submit any plea for mitigation of sentence. Nevertheless, Stahmer formally petitioned the Control Council on October 4, requesting it to commute the death sentence or at least to alter it from hanging to the firing squad. Stahmer pointed out that Göring had been a brave officer in World War I, and one universally respected for his chivalry. He also referred to Göring's then little-known efforts before the war to maintain European peace, and argued that there was not the slightest evidence that Göring had even known of "the extermination of the Jews carried out by Himmler."

*According to Dr. Stahmer. In later years an impudent "last letter" allegedly composed by Göring to Churchill and dated October 1, 1946, was widely circulated in right-wing circles. It was probably a forgery, emanating from South Africa.

A last letter had now come from Emmy, written, despite his veto, on the fourth. "My beloved," she had written:

. . . today suddenly a great calm has come upon me. I am close to you. You are near me, whatever happens! God grant that I am allowed to come once more to Nuremberg. Every second that I can gaze into your beloved face is a joy to me. I sometimes can't understand how I survived Tuesday without dying from the fearful fright! But one can suffer more pain than one supposes. I wonder what you are going through now. You must sense how the multitudes are with you in their boundless love.

How endlessly happy we were. Again and again I review our blissful marriage in my memory. Blessings be upon you, my love, forever.

Words cannot express my love for you. Your Emmy.

With time now running out, Göring wrote across the page, "Thank you, darling! Eternally yours, Hermann." Seeing his attorney for one last time, he gave him through the sliding panel his wedding ring and his blue-leather attaché case to hand to Emmy.

Before leaving the city, Stahmer phoned Emmy that Sunday, to say that she would be permitted one last hour with her husband the next day.

Thin and handsome again, like the lithe, upright aviator and politician of the early thirties, Göring strode into the partitioned room at 2:45 P.M. that last afternoon, October 7, 1946. His right wrist was manacled to Private First Class Russell A. Keller, and three men stood in a semicircle behind him holding Thompson submachine guns. Through the glass he could see Emmy sitting next to the American chaplain Gerecke, nervously clutching the wedding ring. He asked how Edda had taken the news. "I hope life won't be too hard on her," he sighed.

"You may die with your conscience pure," she replied. "You have done here in Nuremberg all that you could for your comrades and for Germany." In a way, she added, he too would be dying in battle.

His face cleared; he found that the lump in his throat had gone. "I had no idea you were so brave."

"Listen closely," she said, inclining toward the glass. "Do you still have your comb?"

"Yes."

"And brush?"

"Yes."

Without changing her tone, she whispered, "Do you still have what Angelo gave you?"

"No," he replied, then hesitated. "I would like to have said yes, because that would make it easier for you. Do you have yours?"

She shook her head.

"They won't hang me," he assured her, choosing his words carefully. "Not that. It's *the Bullet* for me. They won't hang a Hermann Göring."

She was feeling faint. "Shouldn't I go now?" she asked. He smiled. "I'm quite calm, Emmy."*

He left, thinking most probably about that bullet. Since cameramen were waiting out front to film her sorrowing departure, the chaplain opened the back door and let her through behind the partition. She stroked the chairback where Hermann had been sitting, as they walked past—it was still warm.

Hermann had returned to his cell, in mental turmoil. As Dr. Pflücker came in with a sedative, the prisoner said, "I've just seen my wife for the last time, my dear doctor. Now I am *dead*. It was a difficult hour, but she wanted it. She bore up magnificently. She only faltered toward the end."

He looked at the sedative pills. Once, during the summer, he had casually asked Pflücker how many of these might be dangerous. The doctor had replied that even twenty or thirty would only induce a deeper sleep. "It isn't easy to die from sleeping pills," he said, reading the prisoner's mind.

They shook hands—the first time that the normally taciturn Reichsmarschall had done so with him. "If *you* had been with this man for fifteen months," the doctor reproached the Board of Inquiry, "you would understand."

Now Hermann Göring was isolated, except for his friendship with the Texas lieutenant. For a few days he waited to learn the outcome of Stahmer's unauthorized plea for clemency.

That outcome was not in any doubt. Fearing that the Allied Control Council in Berlin might make the wrong use of the powers granted under Section 29 of the London Charter of August 8, 1945, to "reduce or otherwise alter the sentences," the British Labour Cabinet decided late on October 7 to instruct the British member, Air Marshal Sir Sholto Douglas, that "from a political point of view it would be an advantage if there were no alterations of the [Nuremberg] sentences." And so it came to pass. The Control Council met in Berlin on the ninth; they heard that Raeder, Göring, and Jodl had all asked for execution by firing squad. The American member briefly favored Jodl's petition, but in the end all were denied.

Göring somehow learned that newspapermen and photographers would be invited to watch the hangings; and it did not take an Albert Einstein to calculate that the hangings would probably take place on the sixteenth. These two pieces of information were vital to his plan.

There are certain extraordinary documents that suggest that somehow Gö-

*After a period of internment Emmy Göring was cleared by the denazification courts in Bavaria and her remaining property was restored to her; she died in 1974. Edda married a dentist and lives in Munich.

ring had by now reassured himself that at least one lethal cyanide "bullet" was still in his baggage—and that somehow too, he had obtained a firm promise from a third party to smuggle one of these brass capsules into his cell. These documents consist principally of three taunting letters, all dated October 11, that he wrote, perhaps as a final prank. It is improbable that he would have risked leaving these letters lying around his cell for five days—their premature discovery would have resulted in the immediate search of his locked-away belongings and the painful frustration of his plan. So it is a reasonable deduction that he entrusted the letters to some officer whom they were also designed to reassure and protect: an American, no doubt, who would see that they were restored by trusted hand to the cell at literally the last moment—two men who would between them extricate the cyanide bullet from the baggage room, and smuggle it in to the prisoner. It is likely that the American officer was Lieutenant Wheelis (he died in 1954), and that the trusted hand was that of Doctor Pflücker (who is also now dead).

The letters still survive, in an American army safe in Berlin, and are published here for the first time. The first, cross-folded to fit into an upper pocket or very small envelope, was clearly intended to attract ridicule to the pompous little colonel's security measures:

*Nuremberg, October 11, 1946
To the Commandant*

I have always had the poison capsule with me, ever since my delivery into imprisonment. On delivery into Mondorf I had *three* capsules. I left the *first* in my clothing so it would be found upon inspection. I put the *second* under the clothes rack when undressing and retrieved it when dressing. I concealed it so well at Mondorf and here in the cell that despite *frequent* and *very thorough inspections* it could not be found. During the court hearings I kept it with me in my high riding boots.

The *third* capsule is *still* in my little toilet case, in the round pot with the skin cream (hidden in the cream). I could have taken this twice at Mondorf if I had needed it.

None of those entrusted with the inspections is to blame, as it would have been almost *impossible* to find the capsule. It would have been pure chance.*

*Andrus erroneously claimed in his memoirs that Göring admitted in this suicide note that he had concealed the brass capsule "in his anus and in his flabby navel." Since the capsule and enclosed phial subsequently found in the hand cream were identical to the capsule and phial found on his corpse, the latter clearly came from his baggage (and not from outside the prison). Laboratory inspection tentatively found fecal traces on the brass capsule taken from the corpse. This suggests that he may have placed it briefly in his anus—perhaps to confuse the investigation—but given its size (35mm long, 9mm caliber) he could not comfortably have retained it there for long. Postmortem examination showed his fingernails to be clean and free of odor.

Suffice it to say that it would have been impossible for Göring to have secreted the brass, bullet-shaped capsule in his cell as claimed. The cell was liable to random change, and he was often strip-searched without warning. He would not have risked forfeiting the capsule so carelessly. Besides, without damage to his purpose the letter could easily have revealed the *precise* hiding place if it had indeed been hidden in the cell.

He added a postscript to the letter. "Dr. Gilbert told me the Control Council has refused to convert the manner of death to firing squad!"

He now took one of his sheets of notepaper with the heading "The Reichsmarschall of the Greater German Reich," carefully dated this one too—"Nuremberg, October 11, 1946"—and wrote:

To the Allied Control Council

I would have let you shoot me without further ado! But it is not possible to hang the German Reichsmarschall! I cannot permit this, for Germany's sake. Besides, I have no moral obligation to submit to the justice of my enemies. I have therefore chosen the manner of death of the great Hannibal. Hermann Göring.

Turning the page, he continued the letter on the back:

It was clear from the outset that a death sentence would be pronounced against me, as I have always regarded the trial as a purely political act by the victors, but I wanted to see this trial through for my people's sake and I did at least expect that I should not be denied a soldier's death. Before God, my country, and my conscience I feel myself free of the blame that an enemy tribunal has attached to me.

Finally, he wrote a last letter to his wife and enclosed it in an envelope with a letter to the chaplain:

Nuremberg, October 11, 1946

Dear Pastor Gerecke!

Forgive me, but I had to do it like this for political reasons. I have prayed long to my God and feel that I am doing the right thing. (I would have let them shoot me.) Please comfort my wife and tell her that this was *no ordinary suicide*, and that she can rest assured that God will still gather me up in his great mercy.

God protect my dearest ones!

God bless you, dear pastor, evermore. Your Hermann Göring.

My only sweetheart!

Upon mature consideration and after profound prayers to my God, I have decided to take my own life and thus not allow my enemies to execute me. I would always have accepted death by firing squad. But the Reichsmarschall of Greater Germany can not allow himself to be hanged. Moreover, the killings were to be carried out like a spectacle with the press and film cameras there (I assume for the newsreel pictures). Sensation is all that matters.

I however want to die quietly and out of the public eye. My life came to an end the moment I said my last farewell to you. Since then I am filled with a wondrous peace and I regard death as the final release.

I take it as a sign from God that throughout the months of my imprisonment He allowed me the means to free myself from this mortal coil, and that this means was never discovered. In His charity, God thus spared me the bitter end.

All my thoughts are with you, with Edda, and all my beloved friends! The last beats of my heart will mark our great and eternal love. Your Hermann.

When the American prison surgeon, Lieutenant Roska, came to his cell and talked about literature, for want of any other topic, he remarked that Göring seemed remarkably cheerful. Referring to the coming event, Göring remarked that his father had once told him to do anything he wanted—but to do it with a smile.

The psychiatrist Dr. Gilbert made his last visit to the condemned men on the thirteenth. "Only Göring seemed to be deliberately holding out," he reported to Andrus, "because he did not want to admit any more guilt than had already been proven by the prosecution." The Reichsmarschall had mentioned somewhat bitterly "that the Control Council might at least have given them another method of execution."

That night, October 13-14, the condemned men heard heavy trucks backing into the prison yard less than a hundred feet away—the gallows equipment had arrived. Göring heard former Reich manpower commissioner Fritz Sauckel screaming loudly, but there was nothing he could do to help. First Lieutenant John W. West searched his cell, ransacked his belongings, and removed and shook all the bedding while Göring talked volubly and "seemed very happy," as West later testified. He found nothing. Late on the fourteenth, as the hammering from the gymnasium filled the cellblock two hundred feet away, the chaplain came into the cell. Göring asked Gerecke if he knew the execution hour—Gerecke said he did not, and to Göring's distress also refused him Holy Communion. "I refused him the Lord's Supper," the pastor tes-

tified a few days later, "because he denied the divinity of Christ who instituted this sacrament. . . . He became more discouraged because I insisted he couldn't meet Edda, his daughter, in heaven if he refused the Lord's way of salvation."

Thus the different men faced up to the last day in different ways. An enterprising American officer at Nuremberg issued a philatelic "first day cover" to mark the coming executions. Andrus ordered tanks and anti-aircraft units to guard the prison against last-minute liberation attempts. It was now October 15, 1946. At 8:30 A.M. Dr. Pflücker slipped into Göring's cell, checked his pulse while an American private looked on, and talked for ten minutes. Göring was seen reading out some papers to the doctor in German, and the two men laughed. An hour later the prison barber came, again escorted by a private. At 3:15 P.M., prison trusty Otto Streng brought Göring a book from the library—*With the Birds of Passage to Africa*. Göring also asked Streng to fetch some writing materials. At three-thirty, while he was writing, a white-garbed kitchen attendant came in with a mug of tea.

What was he writing? Among the letters found in the cell afterward was one undated item that appears to fit the bill:

I find it tasteless in the extreme to stage our deaths as a show for sensation-hungry reporters, photographers, and the curious. This grand finale is typical of the abysmal depths plumbed by court and prosecution. Pure theater, from start to finish! All rotten comedy!

I understand perfectly well that our enemies want to get rid of us—whether out of fear or hatred. But it would serve their reputation better to do the deed in a soldierly manner.

I myself shall be dying without all this sensation and publicity.

Let me stress once more that I feel not the slightest moral or other obligation to submit to a death sentence or execution by my enemies and those of Germany.

I proceed to the hereafter with joy, and regard death as a release.

I shall hope for my God's mercy! I deeply regret that I cannot help my comrades (particularly Field Marshal Keitel and Colonel General Jodl) to escape this public death spectacle as well.

The entire effort to stop us from doing harm to ourselves was never motivated by concern for our welfare, but purely to make sure that all would be ready for the big sensation.

But *ohne mich* [count me out]! Hermann Göring.

That afternoon Pflücker returned—he had just been told that the condemned men were to be awakened at 11:45 P.M. and notified that their execution was imminent. He was seen to give Göring a white pill—the usual sedative—and place a small white envelope on the table. Göring felt inside the envelope,

then poured some white powder from it into his tea. Perhaps what he was looking for was not inside it. (At least two envelopes would be found in his dead hands. One, marked with his first initial and name, contained the empty brass capsule and had had a corner torn off; it is unfortunately no longer in existence—did it spell his name “Goering,” the American way?)

A few minutes before 6:00 P.M. *Daily Express* reporter R. Selkirk Panton, one of the eight newspapermen privileged to watch the hangings, cabled to his editor in London: “Eight reporters to witness hangings. Am now being taken into prison whence I unpermitted file anything until hangings over.”

The prison block was now a blaze of light; it was obvious that tonight was the big night. When the chaplain came at seven-thirty that evening, the Reichsmarschall complained that he had not been allowed to see poor Fritz Sauckel, to help him through these days. After talking of the dishonor of hanging, there was a silence. “I broke in to ask him once more about his complete surrender of heart and soul to his Savior. [Göring] again claimed he was a Christian, but couldn't accept the teachings of Christ.” He expressed the hope that he could rest during the evening—“Said he felt at ease.”

At 8:30 P.M. the guard changed. Private First Class Gordon Bingham took up his station at the peephole and noticed that Göring was lying on his cot, wearing his boots, pants, and coat, reading the book. Twenty minutes later the prisoner got up, urinated, and changed into his slippers. Two or three times he went over to the table and looked inside the eyeglass case. Then he tidied the cell, moved his writing materials to the chair, and changed into pajamas—pale blue jacket and black silk pants. After that he lay back on the cot, pulled the khaki blankets up to his waist, and appeared to doze.

He had arranged his clothing into neat heaps—the silken undershorts, sleeveless woolen sweater, breeches, coat, and cap. His overcoat and silk robe were folded under his pillow, his bedroom slippers and high dress boots on the floor.

The sentinel could see both arms outside the blanket, as regulations prescribed: his left arm stroking the wall, while his right hand once massaged his forehead. At five past nine Dr. Pflücker made his third round. “I’ll see him later,” he said, indicating No. 5—Göring’s cell.

First Lieutenant James H. Dowd, passing by, saw Göring lying on his back, seemingly asleep. The eight newspaper correspondents were allowed a final peep at the condemned men. Kingsbury Smith, the only American, reported an hour later to his newspaper that he saw Göring slumped on his small iron cot, his heavy shoulders sagging against the bare whitewashed wall, reading a well-thumbed book about the birds of Africa. “[I] stood looking at Göring over shoulder of the prison sentinel whose duty it was to observe Göring constantly. . . . With the eyes of an American security guard watching him like a cat watches a rat, Göring had little hope of emulating Ley’s act [i.e., suicide], even if he had entertained such an idea.” Struck by the prisoner’s “criminal features, the mean and mad face, the lips with

a rat-trap tightness about them," Kingsbury Smith calculated in his cable to New York that Göring would have the longest walk to the gallows, as the No. 5 cell was at the far end of death row.

Perhaps Göring was recalling the words he had once muttered to Dr. Friedrich Bergold, Bormann's attorney—an old but particularly apt German proverb: "These Nurembergers hang no one before they get their hands on him." At half past nine Dr. Pflücker came back to give him and Sauckel their sleeping pills. He did not however want Göring to fall asleep—now of all times—and admitted later that he had in fact filled Göring's (but not Sauckel's) pills with baking soda. He explained in evidence a few days later that he had not wanted Göring to have to be awakened for the execution.*

Be that as it may, as Pflücker entered, escorted by the duty officer First Lieutenant Arthur J. McLinden, Göring sat up immediately. The doctor spoke with him in a low voice for about three minutes. He later testified—for what it is worth—that Göring had told *him* that tonight was the night. The doctor was seen to hand over something, which Göring put in his mouth there and then. After a few more words Pflücker took the pulse of the Reichsmarschall's far (left) wrist, straightened up, shook his right hand ("because, the last time, it was difficult for a doctor *not* to shake hands") and left, followed out of the cell by McLinden.

"*Gute Nacht*," said Göring. Pflücker had been his last visitor. The poison capsule was now in Göring's possession. He lay still for fifteen minutes, his head turned to the wall—calculating, perhaps, how much longer he dare wait. Once he clasped his hands over his eyes for a few minutes. Twice more Lieutenant Dowd peeped in, at 9:35 and 9:40, but Göring had not moved.

Ten-thirty P.M. came. Did Göring perhaps now hear, straining his ears, the sounds down in the yard as chief prison officer Captain Robert B. Starnes met the six-man hanging team and let them into the gymnasium? Göring heard the guard changing, glanced up, and saw a new man—Private First Class Harold F. Johnson—taking Bingham's place at the peephole.

He casually lifted his left hand and clenched it to his face as though to shield his eyes from the spotlight. "He lay perfectly motionless, till about ten-forty," was all that Johnson would later admit having seen, "when he brought his hands across his chest with fingers laced and turned his head to the wall. He lay that way for about two or three minutes, and then placed his hands back along his sides. That was at ten-forty-four P.M. exactly. I looked at my watch to check the time."

*Most suspiciously, it was Dr. Pflücker who drew the attention of the Board of Inquiry to the "toilet bowl" theory, which they subsequently adopted. "You can hide poison in the toilet," he testified. "The toilet has a rim and this is hollow. . . . But," he continued, mentioning the obvious drawback to this theory, "how could Göring know he would always have the same cell?" The detailed testimony of the sentinels shows that Göring at no time on that final day sat on the alcove toilet.

* * *

It is D-Day for Hermann Göring: he is about to make his one-man crossing to eternity. The brass bullet is undone, concealed in one fist. The phial of cyanide is in his mouth, its fragile nipple is poised between his teeth. Daring to wait no longer, he clamps his jaw shut. The glass splinters between his molars, and a stinging, acrid taste of almonds strangles him. A blowing, choking noise escapes his lips.

As a darkness more infinite than any morphia enfolds him, he perhaps hears the hoarse shout of the sentinel, the rattle of the cell door being unlocked, the metallic ring of boot studs pounding along the catwalk outside. His brain certainly flickers long enough to sense Gerecke coming in and feeling his pulse—his struggling eyes focus sufficiently to see the American chaplain's mouth forming the words "This man is dying!"

Perhaps, seconds later, as Dr. Pflücker too comes in, Göring can still feel his right arm being lifted back onto his pajama'd chest, and an envelope being placed under his fingers.

"Remember—I found this in Göring's hand!"

If the dying man hears these words—uttered by Dr. Pflücker to the chaplain—this will explain what the photographs now show: that Hermann Göring dies with one eye winking open and one eye winking shut.