

Hess

Rudolf Walter Richard Hess (1894-1987)



Rudolf Hess was born in a small German community located in Alexandria, Egypt on April 26th 1894. His father, Fritz, was a successful exporter and wholesaler. The very strict and traditional Fritz Hess considered the local German Protestant School lax in the disciplinary department, therefore, his son was educated by private tutors.

Young Hess was an insecure, moody loner and never stood up to the strict demands of his father. Although he preferred to become an astronomer or a physicist, Hess studied business because his father wanted to prepare him to take over the family business. In 1908, the family moved to Germany and Hess enrolled in boarding school and subsequently traveled to Switzerland to attend business school.

In 1914, when the first World War broke out, Hess volunteered for duty. He joined the 7th Bavarian Field Artillery Regiment and later became an infantryman. He performed his military duties with courage and integrity and was awarded the Iron Cross, second class. Despite being twice wounded at the front, he applied for the Imperial Air Corps. His application was rejected, but undaunted, Hess applied for a second time. He was accepted for aeronautical training and was attached to an operational squadron. Soon afterwards, Germany surrendered and the war came to an end.

After the war, Hess went to Bavaria where he attended the University of Munich. But the political situation that developed in Germany at the conclusion of the war pulled Hess away from his studies. As a result of defeat in the first World War, The German emperor had abdicated and fled to Holland, Germany was forced to accept full responsibility for the war, a new and fractured democracy was instituted in the defeated nation and war reparation payments had to be made to the victorious Allies. Resentment and chaos erupted among the German people and feelings were especially strong in the state of Bavaria. The people of

Bavaria concentrated their hatred upon Berlin and the central government that accepted the humiliating terms that the Allies imposed. Since the state of Bavaria was essentially self-governed by a minister-president, the people felt a need for the state to revolt against the central government. Rudolf Hess was in the center of the chaos. Although he had freed himself from his domineering father, he had not gained an independent spirit, he still carried the same vulnerabilities that he had since childhood. He did not have the inner strength to take initiatives on his own, his insecure nature needed a stronger person to lean on and follow. In 1920, he found a person upon whom he could attach his fragile persona, a person so iron-willed and dominating that Hess would serve him with slavish eagerness. On a fateful day in 1920, Rudolf Hess met Adolf Hitler.

The Roots of Hatred

Adolf Hitler's childhood and adolescence were deeply troubled. Although he was a good pupil earning high marks in grammar school, his home life became hectic when his father, Alois, retired in 1895. Alois was domineering and abusive and the children received frequent beatings. Adolf was the most stubborn of the children, despite his young age he showed a strong will and openly disobeyed his father and consequently, he received the most brutal beatings. The violent clashes with his father left Adolf with the scars of seething resentment and repressed anger which he carried into his adult life. Young Adolf used fantasy to escape the harshness of his family life and he buried himself in the books written by Karl May. May, one of Germany's most well known authors, wrote lively and energetic adventures of the American west. Adolf enjoyed imitating May's stories and he engaged the neighborhood boys in elaborate games of cowboys and Indians. Adolf showed a marked talent for drawing and painting and he dreamed of a career as an artist. As far as his father was concerned, however, this was out of the question. Alois insisted that his son enter the civil service, but Adolf wholeheartedly rejected his father's wishes. A battle of wills ensued and in 1900 Alois enrolled his son in a

technical secondary school in Linz. Since Adolf did not want to attend a technical school, he decided to punish his father at the risk of damaging his own scholastic future. He stubbornly refused to dedicate himself to his studies and his grades suffered. He became lazy, obstinate, belligerent, and he took delight in disobeying his teachers. He relished playing the role of class clown and he devised a variety of practical jokes with the other boys. His grades were so low that it became necessary for him to repeat the majority of his first-year courses and even then his grades continued to slide. He alienated most of his classmates because he was irascible. He always wanted to be the leader of the group and he became hostile when he did not get his way. He threw temper tantrums at the slightest provocation and the other children distanced themselves from him. He also did not react kindly to authority and he utterly despised all of his teachers except for one

Adolf's history teacher would have a profound effect on him. Dr. Leopold Poetsch was a fervent German nationalist and a firm follower of the Pan-German movement. The Pan-Germans believed in the superiority of the Aryan race and the *Volkish* movement - strength of the German culture which came from the purity of the soil and the brave, strong, healthy rustic lineage. They also scorned the "inferior" races such as Jews and Slavs. Such ideas were very common in those days, especially among German speaking population of Habsburg ruled Austria. The ethnic Germans felt jeopardized by the many immigrant cultures of the Habsburg empire. Professor Poetsch imposed these views on his impressionable young students. Young Adolf Hitler was enthralled by the lectures and even in his days as dictator, he spoke tenderly of Poetsch and considered him a great man.

At the age of twelve, Adolf went to his first opera, Richard Wagner's *Lohengrin*. He was enchanted by the magical splendor and the drama of German legend. Thus began a lifelong passion for the opera. He began to frequent the Linz opera house and lose himself in the fantasy of Germanic legend, warriors, heroines and dragon slaying. He had a particular passion for the works of Wagner and young Adolf came to idolize the composer. In his years of power, Adolf Hitler named

Wagner as one of the greatest influences in his life, not just his musical dramas but his written works as well. Wagner was an enthusiastic German nationalist and he published several essays on the subject, as well as an anti-Semitic periodical, *Bayreuther Blätter*. Hitler claimed to have read everything that Wagner had ever written.

In January of 1903, Alois Hitler died after suffering a massive pleural hemorrhage. Thirteen-year old Adolf was now the "man of the house". Financially, the Hitler family was well provided for, they received a pension, as well as a yearly allowance for Adolf and sister Paula. In 1905, Adolf's mother, Klara, sold their house in Leonding and the family moved into a rented apartment in Linz. Since there was no longer an authority figure in his life, Adolf now did as he wished. He made no effort to improve his grades and at the age of sixteen, he dropped out of school. With his father gone, he could now entertain his dream of becoming an artist. He did not, however, make any solid attempts towards achieving this dream or anything else for that matter. He made no move to gain employment of any kind. His daily schedule consisted of sleeping until mid-afternoon and spending the day loafing about, reading, drawing, and painting. He went out during the evenings, usually to the opera or for a saunter on the Landstrasse, the main promenade in Linz. He saw himself as a refined and cultured artist and during his evening outings he dressed the part. Always carefully attired, he strolled about carrying an ivory tipped cane.

He still held the resentment instilled in him by his abusive father and he became a touchy and angry boy. Despite his irritable personality, the one thing that carried him through life was an undying self-assurance. He managed to cover his fears and insecurities with a hard, supremely confident exterior. Consequently, the types of people that he attracted were lonely, insecure misfits. Boys that did not have much inner strength and confidence were in awe of the seemingly tough, hard and fiercely passionate Adolf and they were grateful that such a person was giving them attention.

One night, Adolf was vying for standing room at the Linz opera house, and he met August Kubizek, a lonely boy that would become his only friend in those days. Adolf always had an opinion on everything, he

was brimming with ideas and solutions for the ills of the world and despite the fact that he did not make any solid attempts to fix them, he held Kubizek enraptured with his fierce and fiery monologues. On one occasion, Adolf bought a lottery ticket with which he intended to rent an apartment for himself and Kubizek. Only refined art lovers would be invited to the apartment for enlightening cultured conversation. Adolf also intended to hire a cultivated elderly woman to greet their guests and show them in. He found the perfect apartment for his plans and he waited for the lottery drawing. When he lost, he treated Kubizek to an explosive rage about the state lottery system and the idiocy of the Hapsburg empire itself.

Klara Hitler usually yielded to her son, but now she was pressuring him to do something about his aimless future. Adolf's brother-in-law, Leo Raubal, was also pestering Klara about her lazy son. A friend of the family offered to take Adolf as a baker's apprentice, but Adolf would not hear of it. He was an artist and he would not submit to a regular bread-and-butter job. He convinced his mother to let him go to Vienna to apply for entrance to the Academy of Fine Arts. In 1907, Adolf went to the Mortgage Bank of Upper Austria and withdrew his inheritance money and traveled to Vienna

Vienna was quite an experience for the boy from Linz. The city consisted of many different ethnic groups and racism was rampant. The city had a large number of Jewish immigrants and by 1910, it had the largest Jewish population of any city in central Europe. The Jews had become targets of hatred because they carried their own customs, religion, and style of dress, which made them stand out in the eyes of Austria's German-speaking population, who considered themselves German. Anti-Semitism became very common and many of the ethnic Germans resented the presence of the 'alien' foreigners. Viennese newsstands carried numerous anti-Semitic pamphlets and Adolf Hitler would soon come into contact with this literature of hate and it would provide him with an outlet for his own seething hatred which was growing rapidly with each disappointment that he suffered.

Upon his arrival in Vienna, Adolf applied for the Academy of Fine Arts. His confidence was shattered when he was rejected. Utterly shocked

and dismayed, he asked the director of the Academy for the reason for his rejection and he was told that although his work was very good, the Academy could not accept him because he lacked the propensity to draw human figures and animals. He was further told that he showed marked strength in architectural drawing and he would be more successful if he applied to the Vienna School of Architecture. The problem was that he could not apply to the School of Architecture because he did not have the required graduation diploma from secondary school. The idea of going back to school to earn his diploma was unthinkable and he decided to stay in Vienna and let his family believe that he was attending the Academy of Fine Arts. In 1907, Adolf's mother passed away and he returned to Linz. He was thoroughly grief stricken by the loss of his mother. Her pure, undiscriminating love was the only thing that he could rely on and her death left him inconsolable and he now felt completely alone in the world. He also found himself dodging questions from his family members regarding his art studies, for they believed that he was studying at the Academy in Vienna. After his mother's estate was settled, Adolf returned to Vienna. Less than a month later, August Kubizek arrived in Vienna to study at the Conservatory of Music. The two rented a room on the Stumpergasse, a street filled with bargain basement shops near the Westbahnhof, the express train depot. In Vienna, Adolf lived the same aimless lifestyle as he had in Linz. No attempt was made for steady employment and he continued to pretend that he was enrolled at the Academy of Fine Arts so that he would receive his orphan's pension. Once again, his days were spent walking the streets, reading, drawing, and painting and in the evenings he attended the opera. In September of 1908, while Kubizek was visiting his relatives back in Linz, Adolf applied to the Academy of Fine Arts for a second time. On this occasion, the sample drawings that he submitted did not even qualify and he was not permitted to take the entrance exam. Filled with disappointment and frustration, he abruptly moved out of the rented room and left no forwarding address for Kubizek.

Adolf now settled at 22 Felberstrasse, a section of flophouses located in the southwestern part of Vienna. Although he began to run out of money, he refused to find a steady job. Dejected, angry, and

miserable, he had nothing to do with his time but draw, paint, and read. He had become familiar with Vienna's gutter press and he began voraciously reading the anti-Semitic pamphlets available at newsstands and tobacco shops. He became a particular fan of *Ostara*, a periodical named for the Teutonic goddess of spring. *Ostara* was founded by a Cistercian monk by the name of Adolf Lanz. Lanz created his own theory which he called *Theozoology* - he believed in the previous existence of a super-human race which possessed great psychic abilities. This race had mated with beasts and subsequently two individual races came into being: the Aryan race and the "Dark Ones" who were half beast. Lanz changed his name to Georg Lanz von Liebenfels and formed his own society, *The Order of the New Templars*. He moved into a ruined castle in Austria where his followers gathered to participate in mystical chants to the Teutonic spirits. In *Ostara*, Lanz wrote of the conflict between the blonde, blue-eyed Aryans, and the "Dark Ones" who are racially inferior, depraved, savage, sneaky, and possess overwhelmingly high sexual vigor. *Ostara* contained endless tales of pure blonde women being defiled by the ape-like "Dark Ones". The Aryan blood must be kept pure, therefore, marriage between Aryans and non-Aryans should be outlawed; Lanz even suggested that violators should be punished with starvation. He claimed that since the Jews were an "inferior" race, they wanted to bring down the Aryan race and pollute it. The Jews also created capitalism and democracy as part of their scheme to corrupt the Aryans. Adolf Hitler became a fervent reader of *Ostara* and he contacted Lanz in order to receive back issues of the periodical.

Hitler also became an avid follower of Guido von List and the *List Society*. According to List, a "hydra-headed international Jewish conspiracy" existed and the only way to destroy it was to wage a world war. Before war is launched, a strong Aryan Reich must be built which will be led by a single leader - the *fuehrer*. The Reich will be divided into districts or *gaue* and these will be run by district leaders or *gauleiters*. Each *gauleiter* must swear a loyalty oath to the *fuehrer*. In order to ensure that the Reich is racially pure, marriage laws must be enacted to prohibit the mixing of the blood and each couple must keep "blood charts" to prove the purity of the blood of their ancestors. All inferior peoples must be subjugated and forced into slavery, and only

members of the Aryan race will have rights of citizenship. Another of Hitler's favorites was *Handbuch der Judenfrage* [Handbook of the Jewish Question], by Theodor Fritsch. Fritsch believed that the Jews allied themselves with Catholics, Freemasons, and Jehovah's Witnesses and they were scheming for world domination. The Jews were sneaky and evil and they were out to debase and destroy German culture. To "prove" his theory, Fritsch compiled lists of Jews that had committed crimes in the previous century.

Adolf Hitler considered this to be his spiritual awakening. The troubled, miserable young man was finally supplied with answers for all of his failures and woes. He was searching for someone to blame; anyone but himself, and into his lap fell the "great Jewish conspiracy" which is constantly working to destroy the Aryan race. He claimed that he began to see the world in a new light, and he now saw things the way they really were. No longer was anything Hitler's fault, whatever happened was the fault of the Jews and those who conspired with them. Despite his new lease on life, Hitler's own troubles were far from over.

In 1909, Hitler ran out of money and he could not even afford the cheap flophouses anymore. He began to sleep on park benches, but as the cold winter approached, he decided that it was time to go the homeless shelter in the Meidling district. The Oberdachloosenheim was where people went when they had lost all hope. This was the place to go when there was nothing else left in the world, and here arrived a wearied, and hopeless Adolf Hitler. He remained here among the destitute and spent his days and nights sitting on his cot in silence. The other vagabonds recalled that he was so despondent that they tried fruitlessly to cheer him up. Adolf eventually befriended a wanderer by the name of Reinhold Harnisch and he began to pick himself up again. He wrote to his family in Linz and asked for money and an aunt promptly sent him fifty kronen, which he used to move into a men's hostel with Harnisch. Hitler then used some of his money to buy paints and he painted watercolor postcards of Viennese landmarks and Harnisch sold them and the profits were split between them. Hitler's paintings were selling quite well, but his partnership with Harnisch broke up because Hitler accused Harnisch of stealing money and he

even had Harnisch arrested. Hitler proceeded to sell his paintings on his own and he was moderately successful.

Hitler wanted to move out of the immigrant filled Hapsburg empire and go to Germany. In 1909, he had turned twenty years of age, but he failed to register for military service. The Austrian authorities never tracked him down and he assumed that he was out of the woods. In 1913, he packed his few belongings and traveled to Munich. He moved into a small apartment above a tailor's shop and he resumed his painting. He found it considerably more difficult to sell his paintings in Munich and he began to peddle them in shops, beer halls, and door-to-door. He made just enough money to get by. In January of 1914, he found himself under arrest by the Munich police. The Austrian authorities had been searching for him to present him with orders to report to the Linz draft board. Hitler was taken to the Austrian consulate and he consequently reported for his physical examination before the Salzburg draftboard. The result of the examination was: "Unfit for combat and auxiliary duties, too weak. Unable to bear arms."

Hitler returned to Munich and resumed his painting. Within a few months his life would change completely; the Austrian Archduke Francis Ferdinand was assassinated and the world was about to be plunged into a devastating war. Adolf Hitler abandoned his painting and volunteered for military service and he was about to embark on a road that would lead him into a political career and absolute power.

Mission of Peace

In late 1940, with the second World War well under way, Hitler was experiencing problems with England. After victoriously defeating France, he wanted to halt the war in the west as he turned his attention to Russia. He planned a surprise attack on Russia and scheduled it for the spring of 1941. Already having conquered most of Europe, he made a peace proposal to England, the one powerful country that was still free from *Nazi* occupation, and he was certain that his proposal would be accepted. To his surprise, British Prime Minister Winston Churchill had no intention to make peace with the *Nazi* dictator. After having his proposals repeatedly rejected, Hitler sent his *Luftwaffe* to

fight it out with the *British Royal Air Force* in the Battle of Britain. Hitler went into the Battle of Britain apprehensively, now was not the time to stage an all-out attack on England. There were German naval problems, weather problems, and the planned attack of Russia was looming in the near future. He just needed more time and he wished that the Battle of Britain would end.

Rudolf Hess watched the unfolding drama as an outsider. Still desperately loyal to Hitler, he finally saw an opportunity to reinstate himself with his Fuehrer. He was certain that he would be able to convince Winston Churchill to sign a peace treaty with Hitler. Bitterly resentful towards Martin Bormann, Hess wished to prove to Hitler that his loyalty was stronger than Bormann's. He made the decision that he would unofficially appeal to the British, gain their acceptance, and happily surprise Hitler with a peace agreement from the British.

He began to plan out the strategy for his mission of peace, and due to the fact that Hitler was not to find out, Hess told no one about it. His decision was to fly to England personally and speak to Winston Churchill. An interpreter would not be needed because Hess learned to speak English as a child. In order to obtain office with Churchill, he needed someone with connections to the British Prime Minister. Hess remembered back to 1936, during the Olympic Games in Berlin, he met the Duke of the Scottish duchy of Hamilton and the two men exchanged friendly banter. Certain that the Duke of Hamilton would remember him, Hess decided to fly to Scotland and meet the Duke at his home and then Hess would be taken to see Churchill.

Hess' next step was to obtain a plane for his mission. Since he was an old friend of aircraft designer Willy Messerschmidt, Hess requested use of one of his planes, but he did not tell Messerschmidt the true reason behind his request. He was given a Messerschmidt-110 fighter plane and set out on several training flights during the winter of 1940.

He wrote a letter to his Fuehrer but it was to be given to Hitler only in the event that his mission failed. In the letter, he explained his mission and expressed that he was going through with it out of loyalty to Hitler. He closed it with: "And if by chance, My Fuehrer, this project, which I admit has but a very small chance of success, ends in failure and the

fates decide against me, it will always be possible for you to deny all responsibility. Simply say I am crazy."

Hess gave the letter to his two loyal adjutants and instructed them to personally hand it to Hitler if they do not hear from Hess within four hours of his take off to Scotland.

On the morning of May 10th 1941, Rudolf Hess climbed into the cockpit of the Messerschmidt-110 and headed for Scotland. He flew over the North Sea and westward over the coast of Scotland. He began experiencing problems with the plane and realizing that he could not land safely, he parachuted out and landed on the field of farmer David Mclean in Lanarkshire. Mclean heard the crash of the plane and ran out to his field to investigate. Seeing the Messerschmidt-110, he became alarmed and thought that there was a *Nazi* air raid in progress. He then came upon the mysterious pilot of the downed plane, who claimed that he was not a *Nazi* enemy, but a "British friend." Mclean took the pilot into his kitchen, upon which he identified himself as Alfred Horn and he was on a mission of peace and he must be taken to see the Duke of Hamilton. Mclean called the police and the Home Guard and Hess was taken into custody. At Maryhill Barracks in Glasgow, Hess revealed his true identity and once again requested to speak to the Duke of Hamilton. The incredulous authorities did not quite know what to make of all of this. One of the most powerful men in the Third Reich unexpectedly drops in on a fighter plane and claims to be on a mission of peace. A series of interviews were conducted with Hess, first by the Duke of Hamilton and then by Ivone Kirkpatrick, First Secretary to the British Embassy in Berlin. Hess told them that he undertook this mission on his own, and Hitler has no knowledge of it. He stated that Hitler did not wish to demolish England, his only wished for peace. Germany will win the war and it is therefore in the best interest of the British to accept the peace proposal, otherwise, Hitler would have to destroy England. Hess went further to claim that Germany would not accept peace terms with Winston Churchill and the current British government because they have proven themselves to be war mongers and Hitler would not accept negotiations with such men.

The British authorities did not know what to make of the mysterious visitor. Very important questions were raised. Could Hitler truly be unaware of Hess's flight? Surely a man as intelligent as Hitler would know that the British would never fall for such a ridiculous plan. If Hitler was indeed behind this, what was he up to? The British decided to wait it out and force a reaction from Hitler. It was agreed that Hess's presence would not be mentioned in the press, everything would go on as normal. Therefore, if Hitler was behind it, the silence of the British would force him to make the first move. Actually, Hitler was about to get the shock of his life.

On the morning of May 11th, Hitler was doing light paperwork in his office at the Berghof, his home in the Bavarian Alps. Albert Speer, Hitler's architect, was in the outer office waiting to meet with Hitler to discuss some architectural plans. Martin Bormann was seated at the front desk. Rudolf Hess' two adjutants entered the outer office carrying the letter that Hess left behind. They approached Bormann and told him they had a very important message for the Fuehrer from Rudolf Hess. Bormann, as usual, told them that the Fuehrer cannot see them now and that they should leave the letter at the desk and Bormann will deliver it to Hitler later. The two adjutants, however, were persistent and they reported that they are under orders to deliver the message to Hitler personally. Bormann finally gave in, rolled his eyes, and informed Hitler that Hess' adjutants needed to see him. Hitler promptly asked them into his office and closed the door. After a few moments, Speer heard Hitler scream "an inarticulate, animal-like outcry." The office door flew open and Hitler began screaming in on of the worst rages of his life. He ordered the arrest of the two adjutants, screamed for Bormann and began pacing back and forth in his office pointing his finger to his head and yelling that Hess had gone crazy. Since he had not heard news from England, he hoped that Hess did not reach his destination. He ordered weather reports and when he was told that there was bad weather in northern England, he calmed down a bit and exclaimed, " Let's hope that he crashes into the sea!"

Hitler was exasperated and embarrassed and he did not know how to explain this bizarre event that jeopardized his political career. He had signed a non-aggression pact with Russia and Japan on September

26th 1940, and he now desperately wanted to convince Stalin and Hirohito that he did not have a hand in the flight of Rudolf Hess. When Josef Stalin found out about it, he was very suspicious and he feared that Hitler and Churchill were plotting something together.

The following morning, Hitler called a meeting of all of the *Nazi* leaders to discuss the best way to handle the situation. Under the urging of Josef Goebbels, the brilliant propaganda minister, Hitler issued a statement claiming that Rudolf Hess was the victim of severe mental disturbances and as a result of his madness, he undertook this mission completely on his own initiative.

In regard to his former friend, Hitler had nothing but anger, resentment, and bitterness. He felt completely betrayed by Hess and ordered the arrest of all of the people that may have put him up to it. All of Hess' aides, Willy Messerschmidt, and all of the astrologers and fortunetellers that Hess had come in contact with were arrested. Since Hitler was not exactly clear on the intentions of the British with regard to Hess, he gave orders that if Hess is released and he returns to Germany, he is to be shot on the spot. Hitler further abolished the office of Deputy Fuehrer and replaced it with the office of the Head of the Reich Chancellery, and he named Martin Bormann as the new head.

Aftermath

When Rudolf Hess was told of Hitler's reaction to his peace mission, he became overwhelmed with despair and wept for an entire day and an entire night in his cell in the Tower of London. He was held as a special prisoner throughout the duration of the war. His mental health deteriorated rapidly and he suffered from paranoia. When the second World War came to an end in 1945, Hess stood trial for his role in the Third Reich prior to 1941. He was transferred to Nuremberg and was tried with the rest of the *Nazi* leaders in the Nuremberg Trials. For the first half of the trials, Hess claimed to have memory loss, but then he claimed that he regained his memory. He accepted responsibility for

the crimes against him and claimed that he regretted nothing. Prior to hearing their verdicts, the defendants were permitted to make closing statements. Hess' statement was as follows;

"For many years of my life, I had the privilege of working under the greatest man my nation has ever produced in its thousand-year history. Even if I could, I would not erase this part of my life. I am happy that I did my duty for the German people, my duty as a *National Socialist*, and my duty as the Fuehrer's loyal adherent. I do not regret a thing. If I could start over again, I would behave just as I have behaved, even if I knew I would end up being burned on a pyre. Regardless of what people do in the future, I will stand before the judge of eternity. I will justify myself to him, and I know that he will acquit me."

Hess was found guilty of two of the four charges against him and was sentenced to life imprisonment. His sentence was carried out in Spandau Allied Military Prison. During his imprisonment his physical health deteriorated along with his mental health. On August 17th 1987, the British reported that Rudolf Hess hanged himself.

Tina Columbus

HESS, Rudolf Walter Richard
(1894 - 1987)

Reichsminister/SS-Obergruppenführer/M.d.R.:

Born: 26. Apr. 1894 in Alexandria, Egypt, son of a German importer.

Suicide: 17. Aug. 1987 in Spandau Prison, Berlin (apparently hanged himself with an electrical cord).

NSDAP-Nr.: 16 (Joined, Jan. 1920)/SS-Nr.: (None; granted the title & privileges of an honorary SS-Obergruppenführer)

Assignments:

Mitglied des Ministerrates für die Reichsverteidigung (Member of Ministerial Council for Reich Defense): 30. Aug. 1939 - 10. May 1941.

Mitglied des Geheimen Kabinettrates (Member of Secret Cabinet Council): 4. Feb. 1938 - 10. May 1941.

Mitglied des Reichstages: 1933-10. May 1941.

Reichsminister ohne Geschäftsbereich (Reich Minister without Portfolio): 2. Dec. 1933 - 10. May 1941.

Stellvertreter des Führers (StdF): 21. Apr. 1933 - 10. May 1941.

Vorsitzender der Politischen Zentralkommission der NSDAP: 1932-

Gau SS-Führer Oberbayern (later Oberführerbereich "Süd"): 1929 - 31. Oct. 1930.

Hitler's Private Secretary: 1925 - 1932.

Imprisoned for 7 months at fortress of Landsberg am Lech, Bayern, along with Hitler and other Munich Putschists: Battalion commander in Munich Putsch (afterwards, escaped to Austria, but returned to Bavaria to serve a prison sentence along with Hitler): 8./9. Nov. 1923.

World War I & Freikorps Service:

Joined Army, 1914, serving first as a shock troop (Stoßtrupp) leader, later transferring to the Air Service as a lieutenant. Twice wounded, once at Verdun in 1916. After WW I, joined the Thule Gesellschaft and the Freikorps "Epp" in 1919.

Postwar Prosecution:

Tried by International Military Tribunal, Nuremberg, 20. Nov. 1945 - 1. Oct. 1946;
Sentenced to life imprisonment.

Notes:

Summed up his personality in Jun. 1934 with: "The National Socialism of all of us is anchored in uncritical loyalty, in the surrender to the Führer that does not ask for the why in individual cases, in the silent execution of orders." Described Hitler as "pure reason in human form."

On 10. May 1941 Hess, an accomplished pilot, flew a Messerschmitt Bf-110 from Augsburg to Scotland, parachuting 12 miles from the home of the Duke of Hamilton. His intention was to make peace with the "fellow-Nordics" of Great Britain, but the British were unimpressed, and locked Hess up in the Tower of London for the duration of the war. Hitler's reward to the faithful Hess was to publicly declare him insane.

Decorations & Awards:

1914 EK I/II; Verwundetenabzeichen, 1918 in Schwarz; Ehrenkreuz für Frontkämpfer; Goldenes Parteiabzeichen; Dienstauszeichnung der NSDAP in Gold; Ehrendegen des RF SS/Totenkopfring der SS.

From ABR

Nuremberg Trials Judgment on Rudolf Hess

Hess is indicted under all four Counts. He joined the Nazi Party in 1920 and participated in the Munich Putsch on 9th November, 1923. He was imprisoned

with Hitler in the Landsberg fortress in 1924 and became Hitler's closest personal confidant, a relationship which lasted until Hess' flight to the British Isles. On 21st April, 1933, he was appointed Deputy to the Fuehrer, and on 1st December, 1933, was made Reichsminister without Portfolio. He was appointed member of the Secret Cabinet Council on 4th February, 1938, and a member of the Ministerial Council for the Defense of the Reich on 30th August, 1939. In September, 1939, Hess was officially announced by Hitler as successor designate to the Fuehrer after Goering. On 10th May, 1941, he flew from Germany to Scotland.

Crimes against Peace

As deputy to the Fuehrer, Hess was the top man in the Nazi Party with responsibility for handling all Party matters, and authority to make decisions in Hitler's name on all questions of Party leadership. As Reichs Minister without Portfolio he had the authority to approve all legislation suggested by the different Reichs Ministers before it could be enacted as law. In these positions, Hess was an active supporter of preparations for war. His signature appears on the law of 16th March, 1935, establishing compulsory military service. Throughout the years he supported Hitler's policy of vigorous rearmament in many speeches. He told the people that they must sacrifice for armaments, repeating the phrase, "Guns instead of butter." It is true that between 1933 and 1937 Hess made speeches in which he expressed a desire for peace and advocated international economic cooperation. But nothing which they contained can alter the fact that of all the defendants none knew better than Hess how determined Hitler was to realize his ambitions, how fanatical and violent a man he was, and how little likely he was to refrain from resort to force, if this was the only way in which he could achieve his aims.

Hess was an informed and willing participant in German aggression against Austria, Czechoslovakia, and Poland. He was in touch with the illegal Nazi Party in Austria throughout the entire period between the murder of Dollfuss, and the Anschluss, and gave instructions to it during that period. Hess was in Vienna on 12th March, 1938, when the German troops moved in; and on 13th March, 1938, he signed the law for the reunion of Austria within the German Reich. A law of 10th June, 1939, provided for his participation in the administration of Austria. On 2nd July, 1938, he made a speech in commemoration of the unsuccessful putsch by Austrian National Socialists which had been attempted four years before, praising the steps leading up to Anschluss and defending the occupation of Austria by Germany.

In the summer of 1938 Hess was in active touch with Henlein, Chief of the Sudeten German Party in Czechoslovakia. On 27th September, 1938, at the time

of the Munich crisis, he arranged with Keitel to carry out the instructions of Hitler to make the machinery of the Nazi Party available for a secret mobilization. On 14th April, 1939, Hess signed a decree setting up the Government of the Sudetenland as an integral part of the Reich; and an ordinance of 10th June, 1939, provided for his participation in the administration of the Sudetenland. On 7th November, 1938, Hess absorbed Henlein's Sudeten German Party into the Nazi Party, and made a speech in which he emphasized that Hitler had been prepared to resort to war if this had been necessary to acquire the Sudetenland.

On 27th August, 1939, when the attack on Poland had been temporarily postponed in an attempt to induce Great Britain to abandon its guarantee to Poland, Hess publicly praised Hitler's "magnanimous offer" to Poland, and attacked Poland for agitating for war and England for being responsible for Poland's attitude. After the invasion of Poland Hess signed decrees incorporating Danzig and certain Polish territories into the Reich, and setting up the General Government (Poland).

These specific steps which this defendant took in support of Hitler's plans for aggressive action do not indicate the full extent of his responsibility. Until his flight to England, Hess was Hitler's closest personal confidant. Their relationship was such that Hess must have been informed of Hitler's aggressive plans when they came into existence. And he took action to carry out these plans whenever action was necessary.

With him on his flight to England, Hess carried certain peace proposals which he alleged Hitler was prepared to accept. It is significant to note that this flight took place only 10 days after the date on which Hitler fixed, 22nd June, 1941, as the time for attacking the Soviet Union. In conversations carried on after his arrival in England Hess wholeheartedly supported all Germany's aggressive actions up to that time, and attempted to justify Germany's action in connection with Austria, Czechoslovakia, Poland, Norway, Denmark, Belgium, and the Netherlands. He blamed England and France for the war.

War crimes and Crimes against humanity

There is evidence showing the participation of the Party Chancellery, under Hess, in the distribution of orders connected with the commission of War crimes; that Hess may have had knowledge of, even if he did not participate in, the crimes that were being committed in the East, and proposed laws discriminating against Jews and Poles; and that he signed decrees forcing certain groups of Poles to accept German citizenship. The Tribunal, however, does not find that the evidence sufficiently connects Hess with those crimes to sustain a finding of guilt.

As previously indicated the Tribunal found, after a full medical examination of and report on the condition of this defendant, that he should be tried, without any postponement of his case. Since that time further motions have been made that he should again be examined. These the Tribunal denied, after having had a report from the prison psychologist. That Hess acts in an abnormal manner, suffers from loss of memory, and has mentally deteriorated during this Trial, may be true. But there is nothing to show that he does not realize the nature of the charges against him, or is incapable of defending himself. He was ably represented at the Trial by counsel, appointed for that purpose by the Tribunal. There is no suggestion that Hess was not completely sane when the act charged against him were committed.

Conclusion:

The Tribunal finds the Defendant Hess guilty on Counts One and Two; and not guilty on Counts Three and Four.

Sentencing:

Defendant Rudolf Hess, on the counts of the Indictment on which you been convicted, the International Military Tribunal sentences you to imprisonment for life.

Dissenting Opinion

The following dissenting opinion concerning the Tribunal's Life Sentence for Rudolf Hess was produced by the Soviet Judge Major-General Nikitchenko:

The Judgment of the Tribunal correctly and adequately portray the outstanding position which Rudolf Hess occupied in the leadership of the Nazi Party and State. He was indeed Hitler's close personal confidant and his authority was exceedingly great: In this connection it is sufficient to quote Hitler's decree appointing Hess as his deputy: "I hereby appoint Hess as my deputy and give him full power to make decisions in my name on all questions of Party leadership" (Transcript, Afternoon Session, 7th February, 1946).

But the authority of Hess was not only confined to questions of Party leadership.

The official NSDAP publication National Socialist "Party Year Book for 1941", which was admitted as USA Exhibit No. 255, PS-3163, states that: "In addition to the duties of Party leadership, the deputy of the Fuehrer has far-reaching powers in the field of the State. These are first: participation in national and State legislation, including the preparation of the Fuehrer's order. The Deputy of the Fuehrer in this way validates the conception of the Party.... second: Approval of the Deputy of the Fuehrer of proposed appointments for official and labor service

leaders. Three, securing the influence of the Party over the self-government of the municipal units." (Doc. USA-255, PS- 3163.)

Hess was an active supporter of Hitler's aggressive policy. The Crimes against Peace committed by him are dealt with in sufficient detail in the Judgment. The mission undertaken by Hess in flying to England should be considered as the last of these crimes, as it was undertaken in the hope of facilitating the realization of aggression against the Soviet Union by temporarily restraining England from fighting.

The failure of this mission led to Hess's isolation and he took no direct part in the planning and commission of subsequent crimes of the Hitler regime. There can be no doubt, however, that Hess did everything possible for the preparation of these crimes.

Hess, together with Himmler, occupied the role of creator of the SS police organisations of German fascism which afterwards committed the most ruthless Crimes against humanity. The defendant clearly pointed out the "special tasks" which faced the SS formations in occupied territories.

When the Waffen SS was being formed Hess issued a special order through the Party Chancellery which made aiding the conscription of Party members into these organisations by all means compulsory for Party organs. He outlined the tasks set before the Waffen-SS as follows:

"The units of the Waffen SS composed of National Socialists are more suitable than other armed units for the specific tasks to be solved in the occupied Eastern territories due to the intensive training in regard to questions of race and nationality" (GB-267, PS-3245).

As early as 1934 the defendant initiated a proposal that the so-called SD under the Reichsfuehrer SS (Security Service) be given extraordinary powers and thus become the leading force in Nazi Germany.

On 9th June, 1934 Hess issued a decree in accordance with which the "Security Service of the Reichsfuehrer SS" was declared to be the "sole political news and defense service of the Party" (GB-257).

Thus the defendant played a direct part in the creation and consolidation of the system of special police organs which were being prepared for the commission of crimes in occupied territories.

We find Hess to have always been an advocate of the man- hating "master race"

theory. In a speech made on 16th January, 1937 while speaking of the education of the German Nation, Hess pointed out: "Thus, they are being educated to put Germans above the subjects of a foreign nation, regardless of their positions or their origin" (GB-253, PS- 3124).

Hess signed the so-called "Law for the Protection of Blood and Honor" on 9/1May, 1935 (US-200, PS-3179). The body of this law states that "the Fuehrer's deputy is authorised to issue all necessary decrees and directives" for the practical realization of the "Nuremberg decrees".

On 14 November 1935, Hess issued an ordinance under the Reich citizenship law in accordance with which the Jews were denied the right to vote at elections or hold public office (GB-258, PS-1417).

On 20th May, 1938 a decree signed by Hess extended the Nuremberg laws to Austria (GB-259, PS-2124).

On 12th October, 1939 Hess signed a decree creating the administration of Polish occupied territories (Reichsgesetzblatt, No. 210, 1939, p. 2077). Article 2 of this decree gave the defendant Frank the power of dictator.

There is sufficiently convincing evidence showing that this defendant did not limit himself to this general directive which introduced into the occupied Polish territories a regime of unbridled terror. As is shown in the letter of the Reichsminister of Justice to the Chief of the Reich Chancellery dated 17th April, 1941, Hess was the initiator in the formation of special "penal laws" for Poles and Jews in occupied Eastern territories. The role of this defendant in the drawing up of these "laws" is characterised by the Minister of Justice in the following words:

"In accordance with the opinion of the Fuehrer's deputy I started from the point of view that the Pole is less susceptible to the infliction of ordinary punishment.. Under these new kinds of punishment, prisoners are to be lodged outside prisons in camps and are to be forced to do heavy and heaviest labor.. The introduction of corporal punishment which the deputy of the Fuehrer has brought up for discussion has not been included in the draft. I can not agree to this type of punishment.. The procedure for enforcing prosecution has been abrogated, for it seemed intolerable that Poles or Jews should be able to instigate a public indictment. Poles and Jews have also been deprived of the right to prosecute in their own names or join the public prosecution in an action.. From the very beginning it was intended to intensify special treatment in case of need: When this necessity became actual a supplementary decree was issued to which the Fuehrer's deputy refers to in his letter.." (GB-268, R-96)

Thus, there can be no doubt that Hess together with the other major war criminals is guilty of Crimes against humanity.

Taking into consideration that among political leaders of Hitlerite Germany Hess was third in significance and played a decisive role in the crimes of the Nazi regime, I consider the only justified sentence in his case can be death.