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Hitler the man + military leader Described
The Ailing Empire - Haffner

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rightly so—that the colonial fallout with England could be controlled, but that he himself—and to some extent justifiably—was irreplaceable.

Bismarck, after all, was neither a dictator nor a constitutional ruler, but a Prussian minister president and chancellor subject to dismissal. The fact that the early days of the German empire saw an almost twenty-year-long "Bismarck era" was a constitutional anomaly due entirely to the astonishing longevity of Emperor William I. As became obvious after William II's assumption of the throne, Bismarck's position depended on the good will of the emperor. In 1884 Emperor William I was already old, and it was to be assumed that he would soon be succeeded by Crown Prince Frederick, a Liberal linked to England by marriage. Frederick was influenced by his wife and made no secret of his preference for a more liberal domestic policy and a foreign policy tilting toward England. To counteract this and to make it difficult for a future emperor to replace him with a radically different chancellor, Bismarck decided to fan anti-English feelings in Germany and, so it seems to me, intentionally heated things up by his colonial policy.

This interpretation is also borne out by the fact that in the late 1880s, when contrary to all expectations the old emperor lived to be almost ninety-two and the crown prince became mortally ill, Bismarck dropped the colonial policy like a hot potato. With the threat of a German Gladstonian

cabinet thus warded Bismarck's interest in as quickly as it had famous comment again in 1888, when he told a socialist who showed him to all the hidden riches is very nice, but my Here is Russia, and he middle. That is my m

Germany's "social place among the world dead; however, they Bismarck's departure whole, Bismarck himself. 1884-85, was a man who repeatedly stressed that world power was not for could not afford it, then with preserving and saving Europe.

Nonetheless Bismarck's difficulties in Europe soon culminated in the proclamation of 1877. The Ottoman empire, and the Christian, largely Slavians, to break away, had been along Europe's southern

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matic point at the Congress of Berlin in 1878, the prevention of war through crisis management. In retrospect it is clear that this launched Germany on the road to World War I.

Even though Bismarck did not embark on his colonial venture until after the adjournment of the Berlin Congress, let us examine it first, since it was merely a side issue without significant after-effects.

In 1884 and 1885 Bismarck officially made four large African areas that already contained private German trading colonies—Togo, Cameroon, German East Africa, and German Southwest Africa—German protectorates. The facts are not disputed, but historians differ on Bismarck's reasons for doing so. Hans-Ulrich Wehler in his comprehensive study has called it an example of "social imperialism." In this he can cite the authority of Bismarck himself. In January 1885 Bismarck wrote to the German ambassador in London (who disapproved of this move because of the friction it caused between Germany and England) that the colonial question had become a vitally important matter "for reasons of domestic policy." But that actually only substitutes one riddle for another. What were these "reasons of domestic policy"? Wehler offers a wealth of possible domestic motives: the increasingly severe economic depression, the public's "intoxication" with the idea of colonies as a panacea, the fear that the pool of

available African acquisitions of 1884, and, the colonial policy insurance program—national unifying factor—enthusiasm over the creation of the old Reich.

There is another convincing reason, which is often overlooked. According to the sudden turn to colonial policy with England, personal reasons, namely the "Gladstonian" cabinet. Bismarck's son Herbert Bernhard von Bülow, in a memorandum in which he wrote: "When we embark on the Crown Prince was to be prepared for a long influence would be detrimental to the colonial policy, which led to conflict with England."

There exist still credible remarks by Bismarck which are genuine, then the sudden turn is clear: Bismarck used his own position. Before he can remember that he belie

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available African areas was shrinking, the elections of 1884, and, finally, the coincidence of the colonial policy and the equally new social-insurance program—all in all, the need for a new national unifying factor in view of the waning enthusiasm over the creation of the by now ten-year-old Reich.

There is another and, I believe, more convincing reason, which Wehler mentions only in passing. According to this theory, Bismarck by his sudden turn to colonialism deliberately invited friction with England for purely domestic, even personal, reasons, namely his fear of a liberal "Gladstonian" cabinet under Emperor Frederick III. Bismarck's son Herbert allegedly gave Prince Bernhard von Bülow, then the German chancellor, a memorandum in which Bismarck said:

"When we embarked on the colonial policy, the Crown Prince was not yet ill and we had to be prepared for a long reign in which the English influence would be dominant. To prevent this, the colonial policy, which at any moment could have led to conflict with England, had to be instituted."

There exist still clearer though even less provable remarks by Bismarck along these lines. If they are genuine, then the "domestic reason" for Bismarck's sudden turn to colonialism is crystal clear: Bismarck used it preventively to buttress his own position. Before criticizing him, we must remember that he believed—and as it turned out

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1933-38, 1935

Mein Kampf: "It seems as though I had to point the way. The vast East was on the verge of collapse."

He recognized that England was vulnerable for Germany's defeat in the war against England might be avoided. There were many similarities between the events leading up to World War I and those leading up to World War II. England had been eager to keep England out of the event of a continental war against Russia, a war he believed was inevitable. Hitler too made every effort to avoid it, or better still to have England as an ally.

He also thought he knew the reason for England's failure to keep England neutral, although hemmed in on France and Russia, persisted in its policy. This had needlessly challenged England's interest over hegemony outside Europe. England decided not to make the same mistake in World War I, but, on the war against Russia, England's war against France to protect its interests was irrevocable, and probably no accidental plan, so carefully worked out in 1938, failed.

England signed a naval pact with England to limit the German fleet, which was not all that painful considering that Germany had

1937, 1939

practically no fleet to speak of. But perhaps Hitler signed this agreement in good faith. He did not want a war with England or to challenge England. He wanted England to stand by and watch Germany conquer Bolshevik Russia and make it into a German sphere of influence. Hitler sent Ribbentrop on a mission to London with instructions to come back with a signed agreement.

England, however, did not want any agreement with Germany, nor was it ready to accede to Germany's conquest and subjugation of Russia. But it was willing to make major concessions if Germany would accept the status quo on the continent, that is, if Germany agreed to spare France and leave Russia alone.

The basic issue in the German-English negotiations of 1937 and 1939 was Germany's war against Russia. England sought to prevent such a war, not out of affection for the Soviet Union—on the contrary, Russian-British relations were quite bad—but because it realized that a German conquest of the Soviet Union would make Germany, even without a strong navy, far more powerful than England and France. England hoped to dissuade Germany from its projected war of conquest in the East and refused to give Germany the free hand in the East that Ribbentrop openly demanded in Hitler's name. England's response to Ribbentrop's proposal was a policy that came to be known as appeasement.

England proposed to use its influence to help

1937 1939

Germany win major concessions, including control over the German-speaking regions Hitler wanted to integrate into the Reich: Austria, the border regions of Czechoslovakia, and probably Danzig as well. In return, Germany was to commit itself to working together with England and France, particularly with England, to preserve the peace in Europe.

Thus between 1937 and 1939 two conflicting concepts met head-on: Hitler's, which visualized a benevolently neutral England standing by and watching Germany's conquest of the East, and Britain's, which hoped that a satiated, appeased Germany would become part of a peaceful Europe.

England's motives were not purely altruistic. Peace was of overriding importance to England. In case of a European war, England was sure to be drawn in. That would expose the fragility of Britain's worldwide colonial empire—in eastern Asia, in the Mediterranean, in the Near East—for England did not feel strong enough to defend its overseas empire against the other two aggressive revisionist powers, Japan and Italy.

One of the most interesting aspects of this diplomatic balancing act between Germany and England was the fact that initially only Germany stood to gain from it, for it would have allowed Germany to expand and regain its power position on the continent. With the help of the Western powers Hitler could have realized the Central European concept of World War I and averted a sec-

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discovered to its great surprise that in all of Germany there were only sixty thousand fraternal members and that their political activity was absolutely harmless. Here was an instance of fighting a phantom built up by the polemics of the nineteenth century which he uncritically assumed.

The situation is much more complicated in the case of Hitler's animosity against the Church. He himself pointed out how abiding were the impressions he received in his early youth when he had been made to serve as an altar boy and a singer in the choir. In school he had been struck by the way in which the teachings of the Church and of natural science conflicted. The more he had concerned himself with the matter, the more alienated he had found himself, not only from the Catholic Church but from Christianity altogether. In a secret speech which he made in October 1937, Hitler declared that he had freed himself, "after a hard inner struggle, from the remnants of the religious conceptions of his childhood," adding, "I now feel as fresh as a foal in the pasture." With whatever religious feeling remained, he built his own creed, which was essentially a variant of the monism so common before the First World War.³

Once in power, Hitler decisively opposed everything connected with the Church. He spoke of its promoting religious insanity and of its intellectually crippling effect on Christians. Impelled by his belief in the idea of progress, he represented the Church as a backward, spiritually archaic opponent whose teachings were a cultural outrage which, like the persecution of witches, simply had to be done away with. He said in November 1941, "Today no one who is conversant with scientific research can take the teachings of the Church seriously anymore." At the same time he acknowledged that the problem could not be solved simply by the stroke of a pen. The Church would have to "rot away like a gangrenous limb."

³Monism, teaching that there is only one ultimate reality, took the form of a dynamic (rather than naive mechanical) materialism, as represented by the famous biologist Ernst Haeckel (1834-1919), whose *Welträtsel* (*The Riddle of the Universe*, 1899) was an international best-seller, and by the physicist Wilhelm Ostwald (1853-1932), who published five volumes of monistic Sunday sermons between 1911 and 1916. The ethical and moral teachings of this "religion" had a very strong current of social Darwinism.—ED.

Up to this point, I common. Many other startling, however, is Hitler disparaged the "sl attributed everything motives. He accused t avarice," and spoke o "hypocrisy" of Christ intense was his hatred phrases to give it expr rooted in the unsophis which in turn had its t the popularization of t recent ideas about the apparently unknown both Catholicism and zation of both religion was to see in this nott piate laws, surveillance to the spiritual, intell

Hitler's relationship contradiction. Hitler psychology—as some thought but also knew relationship to the Cl uides. He applied p very opposition he hin his limitations. He wa: ness on the subject o scribed, and this char

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him: "In naming Hitler chancellor you have delivered our holy German fatherland into the hands of one of the greatest demagogues of all time. I solemnly predict to you that this wretched man will hurl our country into the abyss and bring unimaginable misery upon our people."⁶ To seal that unholy delivery, Hitler courted reconciliation with Ludendorff. He achieved it in March 1937,⁷ and to his telegram on that year's anniversary of their Putsch Ludendorff replied: "Today my thoughts too are more than ever for that joint effort of ours to raise up Germany. My best wishes accompany your effective action for our people's rise."⁸ Six weeks later Ludendorff was dead, and Hitler declared in epitaph: "With his name is linked for all time the greatest heroic struggle of the German people."⁹ Between telegram and epitaph Hitler had told Party officials in secret sessions that Germany had lacked the "force of leadership" needed to hold Europe in 1918.¹⁰ He completed this thought a year later for a South African interlocutor: "Had an Adolf Hitler stood at the head of Germany during the war, the war would not have been lost."¹¹

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Hitler's continuity with Ludendorff was clearest in the martial-predatory sphere. He enlarged upon Ludendorff's view of peacemaking as imposing one's will on the enemy, Ludendorff's quest for more feeding and breeding ground for future wars, his hard-and-fast operational rule "not to surrender a foot of soil without a tough struggle,"¹² his *modus operandi* of all or nothing, conquer or perish, even his hope for deliverance from the final bind through a stroke of luck such as had befallen Frederick the Great in the Seven Years War.¹³ An overview of Ludendorff as warlord is a preview of Hitler as warlord. "For Ludendorff," runs a recent retrospect, "the First World War neither could nor ought to end with a compromise, but only with victory or defeat." And in his western offensive "Ludendorff staked so much on one card that the high command did not even order a rear line such as Antwerp-Namur-Sedan-Metz built in good time. . . . It is . . . a distinctive mark of Ludendorff's eastern conceptions that no unified plan at all underlay them. . . . Ludendorff's Ukrainian, Crimean, and Caucasian policies in particular were so immoderate that the

1936, 1937, 1940, 1942, 1944

of daily life, but then bolstered by foreign policy successes and later by military victories. Perhaps these responses were all too human, but still it seems to have been characteristic of this regime that it was more likely to win approval from the populace by diverting its attention from misery than by actually ameliorating conditions. Diversions of an intoxicating kind (presented in exactly that fashion) were abundantly available. Rarely has a generation been exposed to so many sensational new things in so few years.

The "Olympics, Spain, and the result of the London talks," states a report of August 1936, "are having a salutary effect on the morale of the populace and are helping us to smooth over all sorts of unpleasant things."¹⁴ In the following year, when relatively little happened, morale evidently reached a low point. "A sense of discontent among the people is stronger than ever," stated a report of May 1937. "The National Socialist government is being held responsible for the shortage of raw materials."¹⁵ The annexation of Austria then sparked "jubilation and joy." During the Sudeten crisis, "fear of war" reigned supreme, and after Munich there was once again "an elated mood."¹⁶

It is well known that the outbreak of war was greeted with little enthusiasm and with great apprehension. Nonetheless, a report on the events of June 1940 states that the victory in the west brought about "a degree of solidarity never hitherto achieved among the entire German people."¹⁷ After this high point, things went slowly downhill again. The uncertainty of the course of the war, the increasing food shortages, and the air raids on German cities prompted a pessimistic mood that set in during the summer of 1942 and, after the battle of Stalingrad, shaded into doubt and resignation and finally into a still hopeful fatalism. The daily struggle for existence and survival displaced politics and dominated all other considerations. It should be noted, however, that the assassination attempt of July 20, 1944, was not only, with few excep-

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Hitler and the Germans

tured by statistics. From time to time public referendums were held, but there was nothing to vote for between the registers of "yes" and "no." Even the officially announced election results, which very early recorded up to one-quarter "no" votes in some places, are unreliable, for falsification of election results is clearly documented in many cases.

But even when a nation is no longer polled, can no longer vote, and has lost the right to express opinions freely, public opinion still exists and can, within limits, be investigated. Even a dictator—especially a dictator—is in his own interest eager to know what his subjects and above all his enemies among those subjects think of him. Under Hitler, a kind of comprehensive polling of public opinion arose from the police surveillance and control of so-called ideological enemies and was incorporated into an extensive set of reports. These reports, which were collected and evaluated by several agencies but with especial zeal by the SD, the security department of the party, tell us more about public moods than about opinions. For the regime wanted above all to know whether morale was good or bad. It was not disposed to heeding the opinions of the populace; it intended to rule, and for that it needed popularity, as Hitler himself had stated.

It goes without saying that the utmost care must be used in drawing conclusions from reports on morale. Not that things were glossed over in the reports; that would have made them worthless. In the end they so dismayed the leadership that Bormann prohibited them in the summer of 1944.¹³ But there is a certain arbitrariness inherent in them. Statistical evidence of any precision is missing; reports often pertain only to certain parts of the Reich, and the spies did not, of course, find out what people were afraid to say. The result is an impression, not a definitive conclusion; a portrait of moods, not of opinions.

Generally speaking, one can say that morale fluctuated in a peculiar way. It was lowered principally by the economic cares

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Army manoeuvres in Mecklenburg, and of her industrial resources in the Krupp factories at Essen. The visit reached its climax in Berlin, where the two dictators stood side by side to address a crowd of eight hundred thousand. Mussolini returned from Germany bewitched by the display of power which had been carefully staged for him. Hitler had stamped on the Duce's mind an indelible impression of German might from which he was never able to set himself free.

Hitler laid himself out to charm as well as to impress, and publicly acclaimed the Duce as 'one of those lonely men of the ages on whom history is not tested, but who themselves are the makers of history'. Hitler's admiration for Mussolini was unfeigned. Mussolini, like himself—and like Stalin, whom Hitler also admired—was a man of the people; Hitler felt at ease with him as he never felt when with members of the traditional ruling classes.

Three weeks later Ribbentrop appeared in Rome to urge the Duce to put Italy's signature to the year-old Anti-Comintern Pact between Germany and Japan. Ribbentrop was disarmingly frank. He had failed in his mission to London, he told Mussolini, and had to recognize that the interests of Germany and Great Britain were irreconcilable. This was excellent hearing for the Duce, and he made little difficulty about signing the Pact. In return, Mussolini told Ribbentrop that he was tired of mounting guard over Austrian independence, especially if the Austrians no longer wanted their independence.

Hitler's exploitation of the quarrel between Italy and the Western Powers was beginning to yield dividends; in his cultivation of Mussolini's friendship he had found the key to unlock the gate to Central Europe.

Hitler's interest in Italy did not lead him to neglect Poland. In 1936 the Poles, worried by the growth of Nazi influence in Danzig and still distrustful of Ger-

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ing hope was to go down in history as the great
Peacemaker; and for this he was prepared to strive
continually in the teeth of facts, and face great risks
for himself and his country.'

The first fruits of Chamberlain's policy were the
visit of Lord Halifax, then Lord President of the
Council, to Germany in November 1937. Hitler, who
agreed to receive Halifax at Berchtesgaden, showed
himself both wilful and evasive. It was impossible, he
declared, to make agreements with countries where
political decisions were dictated by party considera-
tions and were at the mercy of the Press. The British
could not get used to the fact that Germany was no
longer weak and divided; any proposal he made was
automatically suspected, and so on.

Later, after Halifax had reported, Chamberlain
wrote in his private journal: 'The German visit was
from my point of view a great success because it
achieved its object, that of creating an atmosphere
in which it is possible to discuss with Germany the
practical questions involved in a European settle-
ment.' However sincere Chamberlain's desire to reach
a settlement with Germany, in practice it amounted
to an invitation to diplomatic blackmail which Hitler
was not slow to exploit.

On 5 November, Hitler disclosed something of his
real thoughts to a small group of men in a secret
meeting at the Reich Chancellery. It was the same
day the treaty with Poland was signed, and a fort-
night before he listened to Chamberlain's well-meant
messages. Only five others were present besides him-
self and Colonel Hossbach, the adjutant whose min-
utes are the source of our information. They were
Field-Marshal von Blomberg, the German War Min-
ister; Colonel-General von Fritsch, Commander-in-
Chief of the Army; Admiral Raeder, Commander-in-

Chief of the Navy; Göring, Commander-in-Chief of the Air Force, and Neurath, the German Foreign Minister.

Hitler began by explaining that what he had to say was the fruit of his deliberation and experiences during the past four and a half years. Then he put the problem in the simplest terms: 'The aim of German policy was to make secure and to preserve the racial community and to enlarge it. It was therefore a question of space.' Germany's future, Hitler declared, could only be safeguarded by acquiring additional *Lebensraum* in Europe, and it could be found only at the risk of conflict.

Germany had to reckon with two 'hate-inspired antagonists'—not Russia despite all Hitler's talk of the Bolshevik menace, but Britain and France. Neither country was so strong as appeared. There were signs of disintegration in the British Empire—Ireland, India, the threat of Japanese power in the Far East and of Italian in the Mediterranean. In the long run, the Empire could not maintain its position. France's situation was more favourable than that of Britain, but she was confronted with internal political difficulties.

Germany's problem could be solved only by force, and there were several things to be considered. The peak of German power would be reached by 1943-5. After that, equipment would become obsolete, and the rearmament of the other Powers would reduce the German lead. Germany's problem of *Lebensraum* must be solved by 1943-5 at the latest.

However, the necessity for action could arise before that date. If internal strife in France reached such a pitch as to disable the French Army, Germany must immediately strike a blow against the Czechs. Another possibility was that France might become involved in war with another state and so could not take action against Germany. The diversion might emerge from the present tension in the Mediterra-

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nean, and Hitler was resolved to take advantage of
any French or British military preoccupation to at-
tack the Czechs.

In any case, the first objective must be to overrun
Czechoslovakia and Austria and so secure Germany's
eastern and southern flanks.

The significance of this meeting in November 1937
has been a subject of considerable controversy. It is
surely wrong to suggest, as has William Shirer, that
this was the occasion when 'the die was cast. Hitler
had communicated his irrevocable decision to go to
war.' Hitler was far too skilful a politician to make
an irrevocable decision on a series of hypothetical
assumptions. Far from working to a timetable, he
was an opportunist, prepared to profit by whatever
turned up, to wait for the mistakes made by others.

It is far more probable, therefore, that the reason
for the meeting which Hossbach recorded was to over-
ride the doubts about the pace of rearmament ex-
pressed by General Fritsch, and earlier by Schacht,
than to announce some newly conceived decision to
commit Germany to a course deliberately aimed at
war.

But to look for such a decision is to misunderstand
the character of Hitler's foreign policy and his re-
sponsibility for the war which followed. For while
Hitler's tactics were always those of an opportunist,
the aim of his foreign policy never changed from its
first definition in *Mein Kampf* in the 1920s to the at-
tack on Russia in 1941: German expansion towards
the East. Such a policy, as Hitler explicitly recog-
nized in *Mein Kampf*, involved the use of force and
the risk of war. He repeated this in November 1937:
'Germany's problem could only be solved by force
and this was never without attendant risk.' What
changed was not the objective or the means, but Hit-
ler's judgement of the risks he could afford to run.

In his first four years of power, Hitler relied upon
his skill as a politician to exploit the divisions, feeble-

Chancellor, 1933-9

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From Vienna to Prague, 1938-9

1937-235

38←

In September 1936 Hitler named him Plenipotentiary for the Four-Year Plan, a scheme to make Germany self-sufficient which Schacht regarded as impossible. To Schacht's contempt for Göring's ignorance of economics was added the pique of a vain and ambitious man at the rise of a rival power. On 5 September Schacht went on leave of absence from the Ministry of Economics, and his resignation was reluctantly accepted on 8 December 1937. In order to preserve appearances he remained Minister without Portfolio, and for the time being President of the Reichsbank as well. Schacht's successor as Minister of Economics was Walther Funk, but the post was shorn of the greater part of its powers, being wholly subordinated to Göring.

Two principal institutions of the State had so far escaped the process of *Gleichschaltung*—the Foreign Service and the Army. Both were strongholds of that upper-class conservatism which roused all Hitler's suspicion and dislike. Hitler had at first accepted the view that the cooperation of the professional diplomats and the generals was indispensable to him, but he rapidly came to feel contempt for the advice he received from the Foreign Office, whose political as well as social traditions he regarded as too respectable and too limited for the novel, half-revolutionary, half-gangster tactics with which he meant to conduct his foreign policy. Neurath, the Foreign Minister, one of President Hindenburg's appointments, still retained some independence of position, and would have to be replaced.

But the critical relationship was that with the Army. So far the bargain of 1934 had worked well, but not without signs of trouble, which were ominous for the future. The generals, although delighted with the rearmament of Germany, were critical of the speed with which it had been rushed through. The flood of conscripts which began to pour into the depots was more than the four thousand officers of

July 1937

Chancellor, 1933-9

the small Regular Army could train satisfactorily. The figure of thirty-six divisions for the peacetime force which Hitler announced in 1935 had been arbitrarily fixed without the agreement of the General Staff, who would have preferred twenty-one divisions. According to Manstein, who was at that time Chief of Staff at the headquarters of the important Military Area III (in Berlin), he and his commanding officer learned of Hitler's decision for the first time over the radio.

In 1936, again, Hitler had sprung his decision to reoccupy the Rhineland on the Army High Command with the least possible notice. On this occasion Blomberg and Fritsch protested to Hitler at the risks he was running. Hitler did not forget their opposition, more especially as events justified his judgement and not theirs.

If Hitler found it difficult to get on with the stiff, buttoned-up hierarchy of the Army, the generals had their grievances as well. They knew little of what was discussed in the circle round the Führer. The Army had lost its old independent position; there was a new master in Germany, one with whose foreign and internal politics the generals were far from being in agreement. They disliked the Pact with Poland; they were inclined to be friendly with Russia and China, while they had little use for an alliance with Japan and nothing but scorn for Italy. They were alarmed at the prospect of a two-front war after the Franco-Russian Pact, and felt a traditional respect for France as a great military Power, which was at variance with Hitler's contemptuous dismissal of the French as a divided nation. The Party's attitude towards the Churches—in particular the arrest of Pastor Martin Niemöller in July 1937—roused considerable opposition in the Officer Corps. This was reinforced by dislike of the S.S. and S.A., whose ideas began to penetrate the Army as the inevitable result of conscription. The S.S. leader, Himmler, and his

From Vienna to Prague, 193

chief lieutenant, Heydrich—from the Naval Officer Corps in 1930—now entertained the proud independence of the treated the S.S. and its 'office

The man to whom the Army interests was not the man Hitler's puppet, Blomberg, who and Commander-in-Chief of Colonel-General von Fritsch, (the Army (Reichswehr). Fritsch equal to the hopes placed in him.

The key to the relationship the Nazi régime was Hitler's (acquaintance had reduced the (originally felt for the general: them as no more than a group of exceptions, lacked understanding their own highly important specialization, a caste whose position supported by political ability or, by solidarity in face of an interest. By the beginning of a securely established and with a man military rearmament soldiers felt the same need to buy the own terms. Thus when Blomberg grounds of Germany's unpreparedness to apply a brake to the development policy, he disregarded their need to appease their doubts.

Hitler was still smarting with his position Fritsch had expressed when an apparently unconnected incident provided him with the chance to the pretensions of the High Command views.

The trouble began with Blomberg get married to a certain Frau

Sept 1937

the top floor, where Section IV's code-
punched-card computers and the
as set in front of a standard hotel-type
including the Belgian legation, the French
agents in Berlin. He soon learned to
French ambassador André François-
Poncet, or the French journalist Madame

FA monitors were incorruptible civil
the motive to falsify "results." They
typed duplicate pads, in longhand, or
the completed note, already headed
onto a conveyor belt; within minutes
ed, and issued—either by FA dispatch
the bullet through Berlin's pneumatic-
the authorized minister or his Staats-
address code on it—three narrow rings
Leh's private office at the secret Air

edge over every rival contender for
cable crossed Reich territory or its
by the FA. There were FA field units
synchronous teleprinters installed in the
g churned out "results" twenty-four
is "looped into" the great Indo-Cable
cable with India. ("At first," recalled
as quite bountiful.") The cable from
ated the Baltic Sea; Göring's frogmen
between Vienna, Prague, Moscow,
and Reich territory.

Pages were Hitler's new Propaganda
fices. An intercept of any story being
Germany enabled Goebbels to plant an
papers overnight. The FA could also
with a speed and reliability that assisted
in "kills." Seifert's evaluation section
objects; his subsection 12-C kept tabs
ace to vital raw materials like rubber,
oil. Göring's secret agency made him
national egg prices to the yield of low-

as to be supplied automatically with
cepts of his conversations were to be
to check his own phone security. Sur-

viving data shows that he used the system well, as a routine check on the
Reich's ponderous and inefficient bureaucracy. Two typical Brown Pages
that came rattling through the pneumatic tube in December 1944 were number
N400,611 about German explosives manufacture, entitled, "Managing Di-
rector Dr. Müller complaining about lack of official cooperation from Ber-
lin"; and N400,784 about aircraft production: "Ernst Heinkel Aircraft Works,
Vienna, having serious problems getting raw materials for He 219 construc-
tion."

There were those who considered such eavesdropping not *korrekt*—some-
how ungentlemanly. And often there was a prurient element. When Mussolini
paid his first state visit to Berlin in September 1937, an FA team manning
the switchboard at Castle Belvedere monitored his calls to his mistress, Clara
Petacci. When the duke of Windsor came to Salzburg with his American
duchess a month later, Hitler ordered Göring to tap their phones as well.

Such tidbits lightened the darker watches of the night at Charlottenburg.
A monitor would cry out "*Staatsgespräch!*" ("State talks!") and throw the
switch that poured the intimate conversation into every switchboard in the
room. Down the tube came transcripts of the titillating conversations between
one of the most eminent Catholic prelates in Berlin and a nun—"Compared
with him," Milch snickered, "Casanova was a wimp!" Göring had ordered
General von Schleicher's phone tapped, of course. "What is it?" the gen-
eral's wife was heard teasing a friend. "With an *i* everybody wants to be
it. Without an *i*, nobody!" "Give up? *Arisch!*" she triumphed. "Aryan!"

Göring read it out to Gestapo Chief Rudolf Diels, roaring with laughter,
and ordered the wiretap continued.

His Forschungsamt gave to Hitler and his experts a certain deftness, a
sureness of touch when they played their diplomatic poker. A French trade
mission arrived: An FA "flying squad" took over the switchboard at the
Hotel Bristol, monitored even their room-to-room calls, a Brown Page re-
porting the rock-bottom price they had instructions from home to accept was
blow-piped across Berlin to the Ministry of Economics in time for the af-
ternoon's vital conference. After Germany remilitarized the Rhineland in
1936, Chief Evaluator Seifert took to Hitler the Brown Pages (numbered
around N34,500 now) reporting the hysterical foreign-press reaction; Hitler
said calmly "*They'll settle down again.*" In 1938 the FA intercepts (num-
bered around N83,000) would tell him that Britain was not coming to the
aid of Austria in March, nor Czechoslovakia in September.

The sense of sovereign power that this quiet agency gave to Göring cannot
be underestimated. It put him a cut above the rest of Hitler's henchmen.
Noiseless taps were put on the phones of Gauleiter Julius Streicher, the
widely disliked gauleiter of Franconia; on Hitler's female English admirer
Unity Mitford; on his talkative adjutant Fritz Wiedemann, and Wiedemann's
globe-trotting girl friend Princess Stefanie von Hohenlohe; and on Goebbels's
bedmate, the lovely Czech actress Lida Baarova. After obtaining clear proof

1937

Seifert, who often had to deliver the Brown Pages to Göring in person, found him a hard but not unfeeling employer. On the one hand, he had no sense of time or place. He might summon Seifert at dawn to Budapest, then leave him waiting for hours without any breakfast. But, Seifert found, the minister sometimes gained as much pleasure from distributing his growing wealth as from accumulating it. One FA courier could not afford the treatment needed for his child's infantile paralysis. Seifert wrote a message for Göring on that day's FA summary, and it came back that night with a scrawled reply: "Of course I shall pick up all the bills."

"Proceed!" roared Goring, enjoying the situation.

The lion was a pet that he could openly display; the Forschungsamt, however, was a pet that he could not.

RENAISSA

close to tears, had repeated to his fellow pilots the pledge that he had made on disbanding the German Air Force's time-honored Jagdgeschwader 1, the first fighter squadron of the reborn Luftwaffe. He kept his word in both respects, and he would inform him that Germany now was a more powerful in the world.

Creating it in the face of all the inter kind of German military aviation had be Republic had already laid some foundatio far from prying eyes, bases and proving warfare, and even submarines. The you selected a primitive airfield at Lipetsk, experimental site: Another officer, Heinz tactics nearby, and many later famous Hermann Ploch passed through this seci twenties. As recently as September 26, 1

commissioner in Danzig, the venerable Professor Carl J. Burckhardt, entered the room late in May 1937 to protest about plans to introduce the anti-Jewish laws in Danzig and found the general reclining upon a Madame Recamier couch wearing a white velvet uniform loaded with decorations, his fingers bedecked with rings. At intervals a flunky brought in ice packs to apply to a pink-stockinged leg that had been kicked by a horse. Through the French windows Burckhardt could see an expressionless air-force sentry pacing the grounds, while a lion prowled the well-trimmed lawns.

Nicholas von Below, the slim air-force captain who marched in one month later (on June 16) to report formally as Hitler's new air-force adjutant, found Göring all but hidden behind the outrageously large framed photographs parading across the oaken desk. In this same room in November U.S. Ambassador Bullitt would find himself perched "like some sort of animated flea" on one of the outsized chairs—chairs so big, he reported to President Roosevelt a few days later, that Göring looked less than his size, "and, as you know, he strongly resembles the hind end of an elephant."

His domestic popularity was immense. Visited by Sir Robert Vansittart in August 1936 he suggested that, to prove his popularity, they drive together to the roughest location they could find. "I'll wager," he boasted, jabbing a pudgy finger at the diplomat, "that nothing happens to either of us."

"I have practically given up betting against certainties," replied Vansittart dryly.

Göring was said to pay three marks for the wittiest jokes about himself, but it took a foolhardy man to risk making one at his expense. After he was badly seasick during autumn maneuvers aboard the battle cruiser *Deutschland*, two navy lieutenants pronounced him "Reich feeder of the fishes" and presented the German Navy's traditional string vest to him. Göring told the fleet admiral to put both men under arrest. However, a motorist accused of dangerous driving apologized that Göring's car had been coming the other way and the general had forgotten to dip his decorations; he was acquitted. In 1944 captivity, a Focke-Wulf 190 fighter pilot would be heard asking if fellow prisoners knew about the latest medal, the Mammutkreuz—"It's to be awarded to Hermann Göring on our final victory. The Mammoth Cross of the Grand Cross, with diamonds, mounted on self-propelled gun carriage."

By that time his predilection for diamonds was well known. "I want a pot of your finest diamonds," he once commanded his favorite jeweler. "You've got to play with trinkets," he told his giggling staff, "to learn how to trifle with men." Henceforth an adjutant had to carry the pot around on journeys in case Göring felt the sudden urge to play with them. It was the same way with daggers. At a public meeting in December 1936 Backe saw him surreptitiously running his thumb along the side of a favorite dagger while Darré, whom he could not abide, was speaking. His brother-in-law Eric von Rosen had given him a beauty, inscribed: "A knife from Eric to

Hermann." Count Eric at its crossguard and pomme its scabbard richly engraved an American collection).

The pet lions were a c image. Once, while Italy' inhall during the 1936 Oly frisking at his side. The Ita wife of Prince Philipp of I Bruno displayed pale-face the beast outside.

The fighting in Spain inten reinforcements and weapon Göring in conference with wants war, Britain is rear ting four more years of pe then. "In fact, we're in a shooting one."

The first Luftwaffe oper for Spain in December—M ously worried about the sle it will be noticed, Milch— pep talk to their bosses on l lessly scrapped Germany's smaller planes. "The Führer does not ask how big my "Göring," remarked Mil

During conferences, the g these notebooks have been I and one for 1943) do conta are filled just with his han ranging from the most impo Martin, the widowed sister o for his foresters, flunkies, p Göring notebooks often rev tapestries he coveted, and n

two mirrors for vestibul . . . consider tapestry screen, or for reception for my letters of esteer lamp made as per san standard lamp for libran

* D.T. is charged to follow command. + H. L. H. of each day

May 1937

THE B

Feb 1937

Professor Carl J. Burckhardt, entered plans to introduce the anti-Jewish lining upon a Madame Recamier adorned with decorations, his fingers brought in ice packs to apply to by a horse. Through the French air-force sentry pacing the trimmed lawns.

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to fellow & friend.
of each & every
with their people

Hermann." Count Eric also sent him a dagger specially made for him, with its crossguard and pommel encrusted with jewels, its hilt fluted with ivory, its scabbard richly engraved with hunting scenes (it is now a prized item in an American collection).

The pet lions were a carefully calculated part of this playful, primitive image. Once, while Italy's crème-de-la-crème sipped afternoon tea at Carinhall during the 1936 Olympics, he had bounced in with a full-grown lion frisking at his side. The Italian princesses Maria and Mafalda—the latter the wife of Prince Philipp of Hesse—shrieked; the Mussolini sons Vittorio and Bruno displayed pale-faced aplomb; Emmy clucked her tongue and shooed the beast outside.

The fighting in Spain intensified that winter as Russian, German, and Italian reinforcements and weapons poured in. "The situation is very grim," said Göring in conference with his officers early in December 1936. "Russia wants war, Britain is rearming." Germany, he said, had banked on getting four more years of peace, but she might find herself drawn in before then. "In fact, we're in a war already," he pointed out, "though not a shooting one."

The first Luftwaffe operational squadrons had left Greifswald Air Base for Spain in December—Milch had taken the salute. Göring was now seriously worried about the slender strength of his air force. With Udet—not, it will be noticed, Milch—he toured the aircraft factories and delivered a pep talk to their bosses on February 20, 1937. That month Göring thoughtlessly scrapped Germany's only big bomber projects to make way for more smaller planes. "The Führer," said Göring, when Milch found out in April, "does not ask how big my bombers are but how many I have." "Göring," remarked Milch later, "took only sporadic interest."

During conferences, the general was seen to take copious notes. Some of these notebooks have been preserved, and while some (from 1938 to 1942, and one for 1943) do contain businesslike memoranda of meetings, many are filled just with his handwritten lists of gifts, donors, and recipients, ranging from the most important ("1. ego; 2. Emmy; 3. Lily [possibly Lily Martin, the widowed sister of Carin] . . .") down to the cigars and gratuities for his foresters, flunkies, porters, and telephonists at the Reichstag. Such Göring notebooks often reveal his centimeter-precise measurements of the tapestries he coveted, and notes on furnishings for Carinhall:

two mirrors for vestibule . . . elk-hide for chairs and writing desk
... consider tapestry in Reichstag as curtain in front of movie
screen, or for reception hall . . . locations and proper sequence
for my letters of esteem (check library layout) . . . Have silver
lamp made as per sample for writing desk . . . Look for big
standard lamp for library . . . bust of self and bust of Carin . . .

Feb 1937

was essential for his diplomatic
 setting he spoke with often
 visiting aristocrats, and hunting
 as, as he assured Marshal Rydz-
 1937, that Germany had no designs
 Mussolini about Austria,
 the British about Hitler's ultimate
 1936 that Germany would even-
 in October he had laid bare his
 with Lady Maureen Stanley, who
 "You know, of course, what
 ship, with eyes twinkling. "First
 Danzig. And then we shall fight
 why you British should object?"
 1937, the record shows, Göring
 emess of the entire world," and
 establish ties with Britain's con-
 has to be borne in mind that the
 [dwin] is not conservative at all,
 amiable gentleman, the English-
 i, said Göring; but not the British
 Mussolini about the pervasive
 out the British Empire.

[Germany for the next two years.
 ngents, the left-wing Republicans
 ig the Nationalist insurgents, the
 gunned and bombed Republican-
 des.

s—three flights of three Junkers
 ca to cut the road junction north-
 ess against the enemy personnel
 commanding the air-force con-
 anish ground commander] agrees
 of Guernica. If we pull this off,
 though the bomb load was—the
 and 114 of fifty kilos—the little
 ived," wrote Richthofen in some
 . . . nobody could see any roads
 ey just dumped their bombs on
 partially explained, when towns-
 asturian miners had liberally dy-
 the Nationalist advance. "The
 e damaged town, "torched min-
 simply by tossing gasoline cans

into the ground floors." Most of Guernica's five thousand inhabitants had
 already left, but, the Luftwaffe colonel learned, "a few were killed." This
 author carried out investigations in the town records that revealed that some
 ninety people had been killed, most of them in two incidents as bombs hit
 a primitive shelter and a mental hospital. The Communists' own newspaper
 published a list of the injured, totaling thirty-two names. Since
 "Guernica"—symbolized by the Pablo Picasso painting—would ever after
 be chalked up as an atrocity against Göring's name, these figures are worth
 reporting.*

The propaganda echo of Guernica was immediate. Left-wing intellectuals
 around the world touted their versions of the air raid as typical Nazi *Schreck-
 lichkeit*. Nowhere was the outrage louder than in Britain, where the opposition
 Labour party and the Communist party had begun whipping up feelings
 against Göring, claiming that he was angling for an invitation to the coro-
 nation of King George VI in May. Lord Londonderry did diffidently suggest
 Göring might come for the coronation, but the British ambassador, Phipps,
 warned the Foreign Office that there was "quite a good risk of his being
 shot in England," and no invitation was ever issued. During February 1937
 Communist party branches and "left book-club study groups" published
 resolutions insulting him, and one notoriously far-left Labour member of
 Parliament, Ellen Wilkinson, talked of his "bloodstained boots." Göring
 felt deeply wounded by the campaign. "The man in the street," he told Lord
 Lothian on May 4, referring to the less amiable German of that species, "is
 now beginning to sense that Germany's real enemy is Great Britain."

"Other countries have colonies," complained General Göring in the same
 private conversation, "but Germany is to have nothing. The fact is that if a
 German hand so much as tries to pluck a feather from a goose, the Anglo-
 American boot appears and kicks our hand away." He reminded the British
 peer that his air force was now superior to Britain's RAF—and then dangled
 before him the very tempting prospect of a world-embracing Anglo-German
 alliance. "It is Germany's primary interest," he explained, dismissing with
 a flabby wave of one hand the adjutant who insistently reminded him, after
 two hours' talking, that he was already late for lunch with the Führer, "not
 to see any weakening of the British Empire. In fact," he added, mentioning
 for the first time an idea that he had obviously cleared with Hitler, "I would
 go so far as to say that if the British Empire were gravely menaced, it would
 be to our interest to come to its support."

Replacing Baldwin in May 1937, Britain's new prime minister, Neville
 Chamberlain, sincerely desired to improve relations with Germany. He re-
 placed the loose-tongued, sarcastic Phipps as ambassador with Sir Neville
 Henderson. Henderson had admired Göring ever since his *coup de théâtre*

*Picasso's art notebooks show that he had begun sketches for the painting—depicting in fact a
 bullfight—months before the air raid.

*there was no lunch with the Führer.
 arranged in advance.

at the Belgrade funeral ceremonies, and he had a leaning towards the new Germany. He had recently crossed the Atlantic aboard Germany's majestic liner *Cap Arcona*, to brush up his spoken German. Once, the giant Zeppelin-built airship *Hindenburg* hovered overhead, exchanging greetings, until its 2,750-horsepower engines propelled it over the horizon. Both ships became symbols of the violence of world feeling against Hitler: Sabotaged by anti-Nazis, the airship would crumble in flames at Lakehurst, New Jersey, a few days later, killing thirty-five passengers and crew; and eight years later the *Cap Arcona* would be sunk by a single British airplane in the Baltic with the loss of seventy-three hundred civilian lives—five times as many as died aboard the *Titanic*.

The mutual attraction that ripened between Henderson and Göring was of the kind that does sometimes flourish between gentleman and gangster. Whatever his timetable, each would always make time to receive the other. Henderson found the general's questions shrewd, his humor irresistible, his frankness disarming. At their first meeting on May 24, 1937, Göring repeated what he had told Phipps and the former air minister Lord Lothian. "Germany can't even pick a flower," he grumbled, "without Britain saying *es ist verboten*." He emphasized that the Führer was besotted with Britain—hence the naval agreement; and he himself, he added, had forbidden his Luftwaffe to designate Britain as an "enemy" in war games. (This was true.) When he mentioned the irksome Anglo-French alliance at a further meeting, on July 20, the ambassador responded with a critical allusion to the axis between Berlin and Rome. "That's just the point," sighed Göring. "If it weren't for your London-Paris axis, we in Germany would never have taken up with those Italian s.o.b.'s—we don't trust them an inch!"

In September he would confess to Henderson that he admired Sir Francis Drake precisely because he was a pirate. It was a pity, he added, that the British had now gone soft (or been "debrutalized," as he put it).

Henderson was bedazzled by this astute ex-aviator. In September 1937, in a letter to Foreign Secretary Anthony Eden, he would call Göring "the frankest and most sincere of these Nazi leaders with the exception of Hitler." Eden must have choked on his porridge at this line—he himself classed the Führer at that time as only marginally less frank and sincere than Machiavelli. Four years later, composing his memoirs in wartime retirement, Henderson would still confess to unrepentant admiration for Hermann Göring and everything that he had done for Germany.

The Four-Year Plan revolutionized Nazi Germany's economy. Resisting the temptation to set up a special ministry, Göring had used instead his own Prussian Ministry staff as a kind of matrix, to which he appointed extra civil servants—one thousand of them—and co-opted the Staatssekretär (roughly, deputy minister) from each Reich ministry to attend plan meetings. Iron ore was crucial to the plan's success.

May 1937

Göring's seminal interest in local ironmaster Hermann Röchlir had warned him not to rely on startled Göring with the remark of low grade, in Germany to co around fourteen million tons of and the Ruhr steelmakers scorn contained only 25 percent iron, and Lorraine ores; besides, the smelt.

For a year Göring had done r 26, 1936, he had casually asked, the output of iron ores from our c Year Plan, Göring had the autho courage by coal-baron Paul Ple "scrap-metal merchants"—and t mann Alexander Brassert, (of H. undertook to design for the new capable of reducing these difficu frontation with the Ruhr steel indi exploit the ores," he recalled. Th in one report to Göring, an exper whereupon Göring compulsorily p United Steel Works, paying a price

Throughout the spring of 1937, steelmaking empire were being laid Hjalmar Schacht, the economics in the nation's long-term strategic ind dustry had any inkling of Göring's publicly announced on July 15, 193 to H. G. Brassert & Company. He l steel industry at a meeting in Berlin c going to put up the biggest steelwe gitter." Talking of the steel bottlene rival nations' rearmament programs people that the Third Reich is bett countries with their parliamentary g

The "Reichswerke AG für Erzberg (Incorporated Reich Works for Ore Göring")—or the Hermann Göring ' one year later—rapidly developed i combines. The Ruhr industrialists wh now confronted by a powerful outsider if need be to lay hands on the ore fe

makers, united under the leadership of Krupp von Bohlen in the Steel Association (*Stahlverein*) of Düsseldorf, declared war on Göring; encouraged by Schacht, they signed a protest to the government. Schacht himself sent a twelve-page letter to Göring protesting the cost of the new steelworks. "In a totalitarian state," he argued, "it is wholly impossible to conduct a split-level economic policy." He appealed to Hitler, but the economically illiterate Führer left it to Göring to fight this battle. On August 22, Göring sent a stinging twenty-four-page reply to the minister, full of rhetoric but totally ignoring the arguments. He had brute force on his side, and was well aware of it. Replying to the Steel Association's protest in a telegram two days later, he accused them of barefaced "egotism," and of sabotaging the interests of the Reich. He hinted at prosecution. Schacht went on leave with his tail between his legs and eventually resigned.

The H.G.W. remained solely Göring's concern. It was not state controlled, no ministry supervised its rambling affairs. He appointed his stooge Pili Körner chairman of the board. As late as July 1944, the Ministry of Economics would complain that no agency could tell who was on H.G.W.'s board or how it ran its affairs. The answer was one word: autocratically. H.G.W. spread stealthy tentacles across Germany and Austria into the Balkans and southeastern Europe, swallowing strategically interesting companies in interlocking financial deals behind a veil of military secrecy, deals that would have made Göring a hard man to beat on Wall Street. H.G.W. took over iron-ore mines in the Palatinate belonging to Flick; bought up Austria's iron-ore fields in Styria, and eventually built a new steelworks at Linz to process these ores; erected entire cities at Salzgitter and Linz to house the workers; secured basic limestone and coal requirements by swallowing the Walhalla Kaliwerke AG at Regensburg and the Deutsche Kohlenzeche and by forcing Ruhr coal mining companies to sign long-term contracts for supplies. (H.G.W. would eventually control ten major coal mines.)

In Germany, H.G.W. then purchased 53 percent of the Rheinmetall Borsig Arms Company in the Ruhr, with affiliated companies in Essen (Eisen & Metallgesellschaft AG) and Duisburg (Hydraulisch GmbH); in Austria, 78 percent of the auto manufacturers Steyr-Daimler-Puch AG, 100 percent of Steyr Guss-Stahlwerke (which in turn controlled a Swiss arms factory), 51 percent of Maschine und Waggonbau AG at Simmering, 50 percent of the Paukersche Werke AG and the Fanto oil refinery. Ultimately H.G.W. would also purchase controlling stock in the First Danube Navigation Corporation (Ersten Donaudampfschiffahrt AG), thereby gaining important commercial rights and assets in Hungary and Romania. Austria, in fact, was the economic gateway to the Balkans, which was one more reason why Göring wanted to bring Austria under German control.

A few days after he signed the contract for Brassert to build the Hermann Göring Works, the new, enlarged Carinhall was handed over to Göring for permanent occupation. The Görings dispatched a fulsome telegram to Hitler

May - Aug 1937

THE BRI

at Berchtesgaden thanking him as with everything else, we own beautiful house today." There lived in forest-green plush, a up behind in eighteenth-centur

Their very first guest on July challenged Göring—now that I clean about Nazi Germany's u

"Germany," replied Göring Europe. She has to be militari all idea of expanding in the wes not try to recoup Alsace and L

Henderson urged Göring to be to appreciate the great qualities employment in four years from s of its social program was highly tinued, "that Herr Hitler desires

An encouraging smile spread mind at ease," he said. "There"

There was one surprise for all announced that she was pregnant. Mussolini at Carinhall on September retär Milch in his diary, "is exp his astonishment, clearly recalli impotent.) Irreverent witticisms s baby's to be called Hamlet if it' stuttering comedian. "Sein oder translates equally in German as wisecrack that Hermann Göring r in the concentration camp at Este

July 1937

rupp von Bohlen in the Steel As-
lared war on Göring; encouraged
government. Schacht himself sent
ie cost of the new steelworks. "In
lly impossible to conduct a split-
tler, but the economically illiterate
le. On August 22, Göring sent a
nister, full of rhetoric but totally
e on his side, and was well aware
rotest in a telegram two days later,
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acht went on leave with his tail

oncern. It was not state controlled,
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s July 1944, the Ministry of Eco-
could tell who was on H.G.W.'s
ver was one word: autocratically.
Germany and Austria into the Bal-
strategically interesting companies
eill of military secrecy, deals that
beat on Wall Street. H.G.W. took
ging to Flick; bought up Austria's
built a new steelworks at Linz to
t Salzgitte and Linz to house the
l requirements by swallowing the
nd the Deutsche Kohlenzeche and
o sign long-term contracts for sup-
ten major coal mines.)

3 percent of the Rheinmetall Borsig
ted companies in Essen (Eisen &
ydraulisch GmbH); in Austria, 78
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Austria, in fact, was the economic
nore reason why Göring wanted to

t for Brassert to build the Hermann
all was handed over to Göring for
atched a fulsome telegram to Hitler

at Berchtesgaden thanking him for the keys. "We know," this said, "that,
as with everything else, we owe it to you that we are able to move into this
beautiful house today." There was no other home like it. The footmen were
livered in forest-green plush, with sleeve cuffs reversed and coattails caught
up behind in eighteenth-century fashion.

Their very first guest on July 20, 1937, was Ambassador Henderson. He
challenged Göring—now that he was out here in his own domain—to come
clean about Nazi Germany's ultimate ambitions.

"Germany," replied Göring, "has been placed by fate in the heart of
Europe. She has to be militarily strong, and now that we have abandoned
all idea of expanding in the west"—a renewed promise that Germany would
not try to recoup Alsace and Lorraine—"we have to look to the east."

Henderson urged Göring to be patient. He was able, he assured the general,
to appreciate the great qualities of Hitler's government. It had reduced un-
employment in four years from six million to six hundred thousand and much
of its social program was highly progressive. "I can not believe," he con-
tinued, "that Herr Hitler desires to risk all his work on the chance of war."

An encouraging smile spread across Göring's face. "You can set your
mind at ease," he said. "There'll be no more surprises for several years."

There was one surprise for all Germany that autumn—Emmy Göring an-
nounced that she was pregnant. She boasted of it at a farewell luncheon for
Mussolini at Carinhall on September 28. "Mrs. Göring," wrote Staatssek-
retär Milch in his diary, "is expecting a baby in eight months." (He stifled
his astonishment, clearly recalling that Göring had told him that he was
impotent.) Irreverent witticisms swept Berlin's nightclubs and cabarets. "The
baby's to be called Hamlet if it's a b-b-boy," exclaimed Werner Finck, a
stuttering comedian. "*Sein oder n-n-nicht sein!*" (To be or not to be—it
translates equally in German as "His, or not his?") It was not the kind of
wisecrack that Hermann Göring rewarded, and Finck was rehoused abruptly
in the concentration camp at Esterwegen.

15

THE VERY PRIVATE KINGDOM

Only those who saw General Göring with his lions could sense the fondness that each felt for the other: So wrote his chief forester, Ulrich Scherping, in 1937. "And," he added, "these lions were not just cubs—the kind that society ladies might like to be photographed with in the Berlin Zoo. They were great hulking brutes. Many a voice was raised at his temerity in trifling with being slashed by tooth or claw."

There was an unsuspected empathy between this man, Hermann Göring, and the animal kingdom, and there was no phoniness about it. An animal can smell fear, but it also seems to sense the true animal lover. Scherping, an honest woodsman whose great-great-grandfather had served three kings of Prussia as a forester, knew the acuity of a wild animal's perception and marveled at the manner in which Göring controlled man and beast alike.

Of all Göring's works during that grim period known as the Third Reich only one has survived to this day: the enlightened Game Laws that he introduced. The animal world remained his own private kingdom. He was an impassioned huntsman—from a fraternity that has always deemed itself a cut above the rest. Hitler actually called the clannish hunting fraternity "that green Freemasonry." He detested huntsmen, but even he found it useful to

indulge Göring's passion. Göring portrayed a cavalcade of foreign dignitaries, including his invitations to Prussia's husband, Czar Boris of Bulgaria, or the King of Romania, and the prince regent.

This was all to the good, for the huntsmen had the inside track on the game. The shots found the going difficult, but the promotion in the Luftwaffe as a general was those who did not praise Göring. Invited to a shoot during the war, he shot a magnificent twenty-pounder (do better on his father-in-law Sibylla). "Things didn't go so well," Thomas von Kantzow in his diary wrote of Carinhall in a hurry.

It had all begun rather unpromisingly in the Reichstag in 1932, Göring's hunting ground assigned to him by the Reichstag, confidently that within a year he would have all Prussia's state forests at his disposal, to be a microcosm of Germany's natural interest. Each humble parish or district had its laws and taxes. Wildlife could be bred, the breeding of the dwindling species of bear, bison, and wild horse were.

Göring had directed Scherping to form an association (*Deutsche Jägerschaft*) to tend the forests, and protect the game from the taxes on huntsmen to pay for the game. He wanted a new hunting law for Prussia. On May 9, 1933, "one that can last."

With one stroke of the pen he had outlawed the hunt with poisons, artificial baits, or instrument of torture. When the law was passed, he waved them augustly aside. His law, passed in 1934, was envied far beyond Germany. Game officials must be animal lovers, and unafraid of speaking their minds. The best foresters were those who were the test he did not encourage in the game. Burckhardt, sitting in that cavernous room, a phone call from a forester asking for their own action against a plague of

Göring, after listening with mounting anger, "and I'll blast a shotgun up your snout!" Turning to the Swiss diplomat he apologized. "That's how revolutions begin," he said, "letting people take the law into their own hands!"

Keen to pioneer new techniques, he established nature reserves on Darss, a Pomeranian peninsula, and at Rominten in East Prussia. His proudest achievement was the Schorf Heath, on Berlin's doorstep. It was here, on June 10, 1934, that he had inaugurated his new bison sanctuary—oblivious of the snickers of the Berlin diplomatic corps—with two pure bulls and seven hybrid cows. He introduced elk as well. Successions of Prussian kings had tried and failed to restore this noble, ungainly beast to the Schorf Heath; he consulted zoologists, foresters, biologists and—interestingly—experts on artificial insemination, and succeeded, though not without experiencing his own initial disappointments. Neither Swedish elk nor Canadian moose prospered, so he had finally brought in elk calves from East Prussia: seventeen in the fall of 1934, ten a year later, and eleven in 1936. His first native elks would calve in the Schorf Heath sanctuary in May 1937, by which time he had also reared forty-seven local bison.

The whole Schorf Heath experiment worked. From its Werbellin Lake Game Research Laboratory he reintroduced the rarer fauna into the heath, like night owl, wood grouse, heathcock, gray goose, raven, beaver, and otter. During 1936, 140,000 townsfolk forked out 20 pfennigs apiece to tour the wildlife sanctuary. It became a forerunner of the great national parks in other countries.

"For us," he would tell huntsmen assembled for their Saint-Hubert's Day festival that November, "the forest is God's cathedral."

There were those who found the rifle and the huntsman's knife an incongruous way of serving the Creator. But there was a scientific logic in what Göring called "conservation by rifle." Game populations had to be culled to avoid starvation or epidemics, and he and his fraternity pursued this pseudoreligious duty with grisly relish and high ritual.

This animal-loving side of Göring's nature produced strange contrasts. He was capable of unparalleled callousness toward the human species; yet history shows that he introduced a tough antivivisection law through Prussia, preceded by a broadcast warning that he would throw each and every violator into a concentration camp even before the law passed through all its stages of enactment. While in Britain defense scientists contented themselves with testing blast bombs on goats and chimpanzees, in 1942 Göring's high-altitude aviation experts would show no qualms in conducting lethal low-temperature and low-pressure experiments on human beings (criminals under sentence of death supplied by Himmler's concentration camps).

Both facets of Göring's character—the protector of the animal kingdom and the ruthless persecutor of his human enemies—occasionally intersected. At one and the same Reich Cabinet meeting on July 3, 1934, Hitler reported

May 1937

THE VER

on the "shooting of forty-thr
Göring's alter ego had manag
his Reich Game Law. The law
to one wise man, Hermann C
huntsman (*Reichsjägermeister*)
chairman of the International C
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At that same Cabinet session,
resigned as vice-chancellor.

A few days later Papen agr
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Kurt Schuschnigg, who had st
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11, 1936. Over the next mon
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He made no bones about it. H
thwarted Austria's own attempt
1931. Years later he would wri
prison cell, "Even the Anschluss
of our poor fatherland?"

In a way he was by inclination
his childhood years at Castle Mat
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Carinthia—all, coupled now with
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deputy foreign minister, Dr. Guido
old Viennese, fervently and energe
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there will not be the slightest merely beamed, and Schmidt, the German general had dis- at least it was possible to talk

Nazi hierarchy, on January 29, a year-long correspondence in Austria. Göring replied with "kind of German-Austrian," he coming to both of them.

lights: When British newspaper on March 3, 1937, he touched might stage a restoration ment toward Anschluss. "Dann Göring. "Then the cannon will percent of Austrians would vote abscite. As for the rest of the e would make voluntary conces- he added, had no quarrel with ed foreign policies were driving y," promised Göring, his eyes and every guarantee in the west Belgium and Holland as well as Eastern Europe."

the interference when the benign, Mackenzie King came to see him as something of a mystic—he equal measure the Holy Scrip- is eye had lighted upon a verse d the dragon shalt Thou trample s villa at ten-thirty, the startled General Göring's cheek as he interview rambled on for ninety ng's appointment card; Göring p, then inquired whether Britain and raw materials to Germany. worked—how its very strength Göring, his mind roaming, asked tain in everything—"For in- my and Austria wished to unite, ould Canada back Britain?" out," replied Mackenzie King,

"is the danger of Germany taking some precipitate action that might set all of Europe aflame."

Göring reverted to his bullying of the Austrians. At a banquet with visiting Austrian industrialists a few days later, to celebrate the anniversary of Papen's "gentleman's agreement" with their country, he said with a leer that Anschluss was inevitable. He recalled to them how at Geneva in 1931 the casting vote of one obscure South American delegate had wrecked the first Customs Union proposal of their two governments. "We can't forever be dependent on the vote of one jungle savage," he lectured these pained visitors to Berlin. "So why don't we present the world with a fait accompli? Why not!"

The Austrian envoy, Stefan Tauschitz, picked up a telephone and angrily recommended his superiors in Vienna to cancel the rest of the official visit in protest. The Forschungsamt intercept reached Göring only minutes after he returned to his villa. He telephoned a startled Tauschitz to assure him that he had been misquoted. "I had the distinct impression," the incredulous diplomat would testify, "that Göring's office had listened in to my conversation." As for Göring, he was unrepentant and recalled years later the pleasure it had given him to "put the wind up those gentlemen." *

That summer of 1937 Guido Schmidt of Austria hinted, again via the lawyer Friedrich Rigele, that he would welcome another meeting with Göring. Göring suggested Carinhall—"where we would be completely undisturbed"—and offered to send his private plane down to Vienna. (During August, he explained, he would be away cruising aboard his latest toy, the diesel yacht *Carin II*, which the Motor Manufacturers' Association had donated to him.) Schmidt, venturing literally into the lion's den, arrived at Carinhall on September 7, and stayed for several days.

Göring again found him amiable and boisterous—perhaps a type not often met in northern Germany. Schmidt killed a stag called Hermann.

"You've done me in, have you!" exclaimed Göring playfully.

"Wish I had," replied the Austrian minister.

"Not very nice of you," retorted Göring, and he had a lion brought in when they returned to Carinhall. The furry beast lay under the table, licking Guido Schmidt's feet.

"Next time," faltered the Austrian, "I shall bring an animal of my own, a lamb."

"Good," roared Göring. "And a black sheep too. Yourself and Dr. Schuschnigg!"

It was September and time for the annual party rally again. This time London instructed the British ambassador to attend, and Henderson saw for himself the spectacle of aggregate manpower as hundreds of thousands of brown-shirted party automatons paraded at Nuremberg. Hitler arrived after dark.

Goering - It is bad enough to face, but when the darks wind is driven up your neck from without, then one gets

an idea of what one is dealing with.

the arrival of the "messiah" announced by the simultaneous uplifting of three hundred searchlight beams to intersect thousands of feet up, leaving the hushed and darkened stadium inside what Sir Neville called "a cathedral of ice." The thousands of standard-bearers marched up the main lanes carrying red or gold lights that formed five flowing rivers of color in the darkness. The dour Henderson involuntarily thrilled to this pageant as much as if it had been His Majesty's birthday parade.

General Göring joined Henderson in Nuremburg on the eleventh, mentioning oh-so-casually that he had just told Guido Schmidt that the sooner Austria bowed to the inevitable, the better. He assured Henderson once again that Germany's strategic objectives would astonish Britain by their moderation: first, Austria; after that, the oppressed Sudeten-German minority in Czechoslovakia; Poland would then come into line automatically. And this big Robin Hood lookalike with the polished, rouged complexion repeated to the ambassador what he had first said on his arrival in Berlin: "We have no desire to lay hands on anything at all that Britain possesses. We want to be friends with the British Empire. We are prepared to fight for its survival and would, if need be, lend half of our army for that purpose. All that we ask in return is that Britain guard our rear and that the British Navy keep our communications open, if we are attacked in the east."

When Henderson voiced a lame protest about the concentration camps, Göring produced an encyclopedia. "First used by the British," he read out, "in the South African war." Knowing that Sir Neville was one more member of that international "green Freemasonry," he invited him to come and shoot a stag at Rominten, East Prussia, that October.

All along it had seemed likely to Göring that Italy would object most to any Austrian Anschluss with Germany. Mussolini had no desire to see Hitler's troops on his northern frontier. "It's intolerable," Göring had told one Austrian, banging his fist on the table, on November 20, 1936, "that Italy has to play policeman and keep us apart. I am going down to see Mussolini shortly," he added, "and I intend to tell him quite clearly that Anschluss is coming—like it or not!"

Göring visited Rome in January 1937, and told the Italian government that for six million Germans to live outside Germany's door was "against all morality." Mussolini, who had believed Göring was coming only to talk about Spain, was taken aback by Göring's unexpected approach on Austria. He left no doubt that Italy regarded the German-Austrian agreement of 1936 as inviolate. According to the Italian foreign minister Count Ciano, Göring undertook not to indulge in any surprises—"Whatever decision Germany makes on questions so vital to her as Austria, Danzig, or Memel will be preceded by consultations with Italy." Afterward, however, Göring told his friend the ambassador in Rome, Ulrich von Hassell, that Italy was going to

his face in the morning.

have to accept that Austria was a brief vacation in Capri, Göring on January 23, in which—as I adopted a more restrained position on Vienna to adhere to the 1936 could reassure him—and he assured were to be no surprises over Austria to the Austrian ambassador in Berlin . . . a rather more modest one.

General Göring had not, however, visited Berlin in September 1936 one wall of Carinhall a medieval city designated by its "trademark" and Austria erased. He paraded eventually had to direct his attention Göring recalled later, "to talk to

To Hitler, Austria was but a temptation. "We're going to tackle the Austrian experts Darré and Backe on the lifting one corner of the veil that Göring was probably long privy according to Darré, who recorded the Baltic and in the open space million men in war, if this will,

In East Prussia, Germany's eastern than in the west. Its hardy front anesthetized that suffering with a They hunted across wildernesses known to them by names like M Osiris—this latter would become of 1937. The very finest beasts reserved for Göring himself to str *raison d'état* required, deliver to regent Miklos Horthy or some Be

Of course, not every statesman lomatic archives record that after David Lloyd George said gruffly, pleasure of his company at a sh going back to the Hoek [of Holland] Göring was for all that a fine s breathless pursuit of his quarry the tree, to sitting passively in a blind

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have to accept that Austria was in the German sphere of interest. Following
a brief vacation in Capri, Göring returned for a pointed talk with Mussolini
on January 23, in which—as the transcript in Göring's papers shows—he
adopted a more restrained position. He now merely asked Mussolini to prevail
on Vienna to adhere to the 1936 agreement. "In Germany's name he [Göring]
could reassure him—and he assumed the same held true for Italy—that there
were to be no surprises over Austria." "Yes," triumphed Ciano afterward
to the Austrian ambassador in Rome, "a highly inflated Göring arrived here
... a rather more modest one left."

General Göring had not, however, given up over Austria. Before the Duce
visited Berlin in September 1937, Göring commissioned an artist to paint on
one wall of Carinhall a medieval-style fresco, a map of the Reich with each
city designated by its "trademark"—and with the frontier between Germany
and Austria erased. He paraded the Italian dictator past it several times but
eventually had to direct his attention to the map. "That gave me an excuse,"
Göring recalled later, "to talk bluntly about the two countries uniting."

To Hitler, Austria was but a tedious foreplay to his own grandiose strategy.
"We're going to tackle the Austria question first," he told his agriculture
experts Darré and Backe on the last day of that month, September 1937,
lifting one corner of the veil that concealed his innermost thoughts—to which
Göring was probably long privy. "But our real future," Hitler continued,
according to Darré, who recorded these words in his private diary, "lies on
the Baltic and in the open spaces of Russia. Better to sacrifice another two
million men in war, if this will give us the room to breathe."

In East Prussia, Germany's easternmost province, dawn came an hour earlier
than in the west. Its hardy frontier breed had suffered in each war but
anesthetized that suffering with a grog made of much rum and little water.
They hunted across wildernesses dominated by the cry of rutting stags, beasts
known to them by names like Matador or Chandelier, Robber Chieftain or
Osiris—this latter would become the Neu-Sternberg preserve's "royal stag"
of 1937. The very finest beasts (later called "Reichsmarschall stags") were
reserved for Göring himself to stalk for days, then slay exultantly or, with
raison d'état required, deliver to the "gun-guest of honor"—Hungarian
regent Miklos Horthy or some Balkan king.

Of course, not every statesman succumbed to Göring's allures. The dip-
lomatic archives record that after seeing Hitler, Britain's Great War leader
David Lloyd George said gruffly, when told that Göring was awaiting the
pleasure of his company at a shooting box in southern Germany, "I am
going back to the Hoek [of Holland], and Göring can go to the devil!"

Göring was for all that a fine shot and true sportsman. He preferred the
breathless pursuit of his quarry through moor and bog and fen, from tree to
tree, to sitting passively in a blind. Up at 4:00 A.M., he would stalk for six

Memel, and the Polish Corridor. On the morning of the fourth, Göring noted, "Thick fog, sun partly coming through. Discussion in the morning with Henderson." He again outlined to the Englishman his broad vision of a partnership between Britain and Germany—with Britain recognizing Nazi Germany's hegemony in the continent of Europe. He concluded his diary:

Henderson this A.M. shot another fine stag, 14-pointer . . . 3:00 P.M., stalked alone in Jodupp. On bare ground to right of Wollner pasture watched a scene of activity just like rutting at its peak, about ten stags were there crying in full voice, several combats. Kept a right royal 20- or 22-pointer under observation for some time, only six years old but a magnificent future. He had a harem, but was beaten off by an older 14- or 16-pointer. A most engrossing spectacle.

Henderson would never forget those two days at Rominten. As dusk fell, the chief forester ceremonially called the bag. Göring thanked all the huntsmen, and they sounded the hallali (death of the stag) on their hunting horns. "In the starlit night in the depths of the great forest," wrote Henderson, "with the notes of the horns echoing back from the tall fir trees in the distances, the effect was extremely beautiful."

There was an intimacy, transcending all frontiers and enmities, between these hunting men; nor has it been without purpose to dwell upon it here. We shall see that as the final curtain descends upon the caged Hermann Göring, and he casts about him like an injured animal caught in "that medieval instrument of torture," a steel-jawed trap, for a friend to deliver the releasing coup de grâce, his eye lights upon an officer—and huntsman, like himself.

With proper panoply and flourish, with shouts of *Heil* and the roll of drums, with the rattle and slap of a guard of honor from his "Hermann Göring" Regiment presenting arms, Göring opened the International Hunting Exhibition in Berlin in November 1937. Once again money had been no object, and there were sections in the spacious galleries devoted to each country, to the history of hunting, and to the most famous paintings on this ancient lore.

Britain was well represented. Carl-Maria von Weber's opera about Marksmanship, *Der Freischütz* (*The Sharpshooter*), was staged on November 2, as an overture to the exhibition, and during the intermission Göring walked over to Sir Nevile Henderson and thanked him for the friendly reception just accorded to his top generals Milch, Stumpff, and Udet during their recent tour of RAF squadrons and establishments. "It is inconceivable," Göring beamed to the ambassador, "that there should ever be war between men who get on so well together and respect each other so much as the British and German airmen."

The exhibition was a big people thronged the halls, weeks. For those three weeks in his baroque hunting coat Berlin Castle on November on the fourth, he presided at Chasse on the fifth.

At 4:00 P.M. that day he to reappear at the Reich Ch Hitler had summoned a session. He had returned to the capital ideas. Since his return von B in the glass-fronted winter garden Rudolf Hess, or strolling up hours or more.

Originally, the army had resolve the conflicting demands to bring home to the army's that he had certain plans. As it was time to "raise steam"

After the others—War Minister von Neurath, and Minister assembled in the winter garden curtains across the glass doors his thoughts on future strategy his officers, Colonel Alfred J

Colonel Friedrich Hossbach longhand a full summary of the way of solving Germany's problem. There is no risk-free wait, he added, because in six them again. They were going to he might order a lightning attack propitious.

Hitler's speech met with a contribution was to suggest that the in Spain now.

At 8:30 P.M. the little international reception that he had ordered at the Aviators' Building (the Prussian Parliament). Here the Austrian minister in Berlin treat," he boomed, "Austria!"

The next evening Guido Schu

Nov 1937

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The exhibition was a box-office triumph. On some days forty thousand people thronged the halls, and Göring ordered the run extended to three weeks. For those three weeks he was in his element. He besported himself in his baroque hunting costume, he banqueted as Reich chief huntsman in Berlin Castle on November 3, he dined with the world's leading huntsmen on the fourth, he presided congenially over the Conseil Internationale de la Chasse on the fifth.

At 4:00 P.M. that day he mysteriously melted away from the festivities, to reappear at the Reich Chancellery, in full uniform, an hour or two later: Hitler had summoned a secret conference that was to go down in history. He had returned to the capital a few days before, brimming with dangerous ideas. Since his return von Below, had glimpsed him pacing the broad carpet in the glass-fronted winter garden sunk in thought, or speaking quietly with Rudolf Hess, or strolling up and down with Göring, sometimes for three hours or more.

Originally, the army had called for this conference on November 5 to resolve the conflicting demands for steel allocations. But Hitler had decided to bring home to the army's recalcitrant commander, Werner von Fritsch, that he had certain plans. As he told Göring shortly before the others arrived, it was time to "raise steam" in his generals.

After the others—War Minister Field Marshal von Blomberg, Foreign Minister von Neurath, and Navy Commander Admiral Erich Raeder—had assembled in the winter garden, Hitler motioned to a servant to draw the curtains across the glass doors and began, reading from notes, to "set out his thoughts on future strategic objectives" (as Blomberg dictated to one of his officers, Colonel Alfred Jodl, afterward).

Colonel Friedrich Hossbach, Blomberg's adjutant, shortly wrote out in longhand a full summary of Hitler's remarks. "There is only one possible way of solving Germany's problem," Hitler declared, "and that is to use force. There is no risk-free way of solving it." Nor could they afford to wait, he added, because in six years the balance of power would tilt against them again. They were going to fight for Lebensraum—but even before then he might order a lightning attack on Czechoslovakia if circumstances were propitious.

Hitler's speech met with a muted response. Göring's only recorded contribution was to suggest that they ought, therefore, to wind up their operations in Spain now.

At 8:30 P.M. the little intermezzo was over. Göring hurried back to the grand reception that he had organized for the visiting huntsmen of Europe at the Aviators' Building (the Haus der Flieger, which had previously been the Prussian Parliament). Here he playfully buttonholed Stefan Tauschitz, the Austrian minister in Berlin. "The Führer still owes us one breakfast treat," he boomed, "Austria!"

The next evening Guido Schmidt came to the "lion's den" again. Göring

invited him out to Carinhall on the seventh and nonchalantly walked him past the map fresco, which Göring had left in place since Mussolini's visit. "It's such a fine map," he apologized to the Austrian, "and I didn't want to have to keep changing it. So I have had it drawn in keeping with the way that things are shaping anyway."

Hermann Göring's hunting exhibition acted as a honeypot to all the big bears of European field sports. On November 17, his brother-in-law Franz Hueber tipped him off that the head of Austrian security, Paul Revertera, was privately visiting the halls. He sent a chauffeur to fetch the visitor from the Hotel Eden at 5:00 P.M., and the well-tailored, gray-haired Austrian was piloted by an SS man through the marble labyrinth into Göring's villa soon after. Their two-hour conversation started in the safe preserves of the new hunting laws, but then Göring guided his guest out into more rugged terrain. He criticized the fortifications that Austria was now building on her frontier with Germany, and accused Vienna of violating the 1936 agreement. He said that "people" were pressing for a solution. "Our Seventh Army, they say, would go through Austria like butter." He advised the Austrian not to bank on Paris or London; France was exhausted, he claimed, and the British dominions would discourage any intervention by London. This left only Prague, he suggested, adding with a grin, "And we'd take her on too!"

Sweetening these inhospitable remarks, Göring flattered Revertera by saying that Austria had the better leader types and would therefore provide the Reich with a reservoir of fine commanders; and he also drew a benign picture of Austria as the future cultural center of the Reich. The Austrian official returned to the Hotel Eden aghast at the general's crude bluster.

A far more significant exhibition visitor came to see General Göring three days later. Lord Halifax, traveling to Berlin as "master of Middleton hounds" rather than as a British Cabinet member, toured the halls round-eyed, conferred with Hitler, and returned to Berlin on November 20 to meet Göring. Göring telephoned Hitler at Berchtesgaden to ask if he might speak frankly with the Englishman, and toward midday sent his most luxurious limousine down the new autobahn to bring Lord Halifax out to the Schorf Heath.

Summarizing their meeting in his diary, Lord Halifax admitted he was "immensely entertained." "Göring," he recorded, "met me on the way dressed in brown breeches and boots all in one, with green leather jerkin and fur-collared short coat on top. . . . Altogether a very picturesque and arresting figure, completed by green hat and large chamois tuft!" After paying the obligatory homage to Göring's elk and bison, he found himself being driven off to see the tree-planting operations in a shooting phaeton drawn by a pair of high-stepping Hanoverian chestnuts, then on to Carinhall itself—"a large house," wrote Halifax, "built between two lakes in pine woods, stone with deep thatched roof and latticed dormer windows out of it. It occupies three sides of a courtyard, with a colonnade across the end."

Nov 1937



By the end of World War I Hermann Göring was one of the top scoring fighter aces. NATIONAL ARCHIVES



Hermann Göring (far right) with his wife. He had already earned his Iron Cross and the Légion d'honneur. COLLECTIONS OF THE NATIONAL ARCHIVES

Nov 1937 '7



owers, while Göring's chief
it), looks on. Edda's near-
Göring's life, making him
AL ARCHIVES

As Colonel General Göring, master of all these domains, led his guests through the long entrance gallery and rooms already filling with treasures, Carinhall began to work the familiar magic on this High Church Yorkshire viscount. His nostrils flared, picking up the mansion's pervasive, unmistakable atmosphere of aristocratic pretensions; it was like an alcoholic getting a whiff of his first tot of the day. His voyeur's eye missed no detail: the hunting trophies, the devotional garden doorframe carved somewhere in Bavaria depicting an Assumption of Our Lady, the great hall with its remote-controlled wall of glass overlooking the lake at one end, the dining room lined with a parchment that looked to Halifax's approving eye rather like mother-of-pearl.

After luncheon [he noted in his diary], which included some of the rawest beef I have ever seen, Göring took me off with [chief interpreter Paul] Schmidt to talk. I repeated to him what I had said to Hitler, namely that we did not wish and had never wished to stand strictly on the present state of the world, but that we were concerned to see reasonable settlements reached.

"It would be a disaster," agreed Göring, "if the two finest races of the world were ever to be so mad as to fight." The British Empire was, he suggested, a great influence for peace—but Germany too was entitled to her 'special spheres of influence.' "

Afterward, Lord Halifax found himself wondering how many assassinations his host had commanded, "for good cause or bad." He had to confess that the general's personality was attractive—"like a great schoolboy, full of life and pride in all he was doing, showing off his forest and animals, and then talking high politics out of the setting of green jerkin and red dagger."

(Blutorden) for their part in the 1923 putsch, for example—but not close enough. Several times since 1935 Karl Bodenschatz had overheard Göring and Hitler discuss the possibility that the top army generals might be plotting against the regime, and in the autumn of 1937 Göring asked Blomberg outright whether his generals would follow Hitler into a war.

It is clear that by December 1937 Göring had begun to indulge in fantasies of taking supreme command of the armed forces himself in place of Blomberg. The only other candidate would be General von Fritsch. At fifty-eight, Fritsch was not much younger than Blomberg, and Göring felt it unlikely that Hitler would feel comfortable with him. Promoted to colonel-general on April 20, 1936, Fritsch came from a puritan Protestant family. His upright bearing suggested he might even be wearing a lace-up corset. With a monocle screwed into his left eye to help his face remain sinister and motionless, he was an old-fashioned bachelor who loved horses and hated Jews with equal passion. "We are in the midst of three battles," he wrote to a baroness in 1938, "and the one against the Jews is the most difficult." For the time being, however, he had left the Berlin stage, vacationing in Egypt—unaware that Himmler (perhaps at Göring's instigation) was having him tailed by the Gestapo. Nor, as yet, did Blomberg provide Göring with an inch of leverage although (as Admiral Raeder later gathered from a chance remark) Fritsch had ordered that Blomberg be shadowed, and Himmler's Gestapo was later found to have concealed a microphone in Blomberg's office.

Göring could find no way to fault Blomberg until mid-December. Then, suddenly, the tip of a promising scandal began to surface in the War Ministry. The sixty-year-old widowed field marshal announced that he too was going on leave. Those who knew spread the word that he too was taking a twenty-four-year-old secretary with him. "The field marshal is inexplicably agitated," Colonel Jodl carefully recorded on the fifteenth, adding, "Apparently a personal matter; going away for eight days, destination unknown." His agitation was explicable: The secretary had just informed him (quite untruthfully) that she was pregnant by him (so the field marshal's family informed this author). Less than a week later Hitler ordered him to attend the state funeral of Ludendorff in Munich—to be held on December 22 in the shadow of the Feldherrnhalle where Hitler, Göring, and Ludendorff had confronted the blazing carbines of the Bavarian *Landespolizei* fourteen years before. As the ceremony ended, Blomberg walked across the snow-covered square to Hitler, asked to see him in private, and formally asked his permission to marry the girl; he added no more than that she was of "humble means"—a secretary in a government agency. To complete his folly, Blomberg approached Göring, of all people, a few days later and asked him to use his powers as head of the Four-Year Plan to see that an alleged "rival" for the young lady's attentions was spirited out of Germany. "It's an unusual request," growled Göring, "but I'll see what I can do."

On January 12, 1938, guests at Hermann Göring's forty-fifth birthday

THE BLOMBERG-FRITSCH AFFAIR

In December 1937 Göring issued instructions—in line with Hitler's command at the winter-garden for a lightning operation primarily against

Blomberg, circulated an urgent corrective measure that might lead headquarters units early before the end of 1938."

One of the architectural defects that marred the hierarchy—Göring's now wholly anomalous position among the three highest tiers of the German command in chief, Göring was subordinate to whom Hitler had appointed field marshal, but equal to the army's commander in chief. As a Reich minister, however—of equal rank. And as the Führer's chosen successor, Blomberg's superior.

Younger than Göring—he had passed through the ranks of the infant. Since 1933 he had grown closer to Hitler, and was to accept the Nazi "blood medal"

Göring immediately began extensive canvassing to be awarded the War Ministry. He sent over Bodenschatz to brief Wiedemann; he briefed von Below himself. But Hitler hesitated to give him the supreme command. His own solution, which he would disclose to Blomberg a few days later, was to become supreme commander himself, making use of Blomberg's staff, the Wehrmachtsamt, for the time being.

Unaware that Hitler had decided to award himself the prize, Göring took furtive steps to disqualify the only other runner, General von Fritsch. He recalled that the general had apparently once been accused of a peccadillo and sent for the police file to refresh his memory. Two years earlier a young convicted blackmailer, one Otto Schmidt, had claimed that in November 1933 he had witnessed a male prostitute, one Sepp Weingärtner, engaged in a homosexual act with a man who identified himself as "General Fritsch"; Schmidt had extorted twenty-five hundred marks from the man afterward. Among other homosexual victims Schmidt had named were Walter Funk and other leading Nazis. The authorities had notified Hitler and Göring. Hitler had ordered the investigations discontinued, because the Rhineland crisis was brewing. But evidently the investigations continued nonetheless, because early in July 1936 Schmidt was turned over to the Gestapo for higher interrogation, and this time the chief of the Homosexual Crimes Squad, Josef Meisinger, showed the blackmailer a photograph of General von Fritsch. From the general's private papers we know that at the end of 1937—perhaps coincidentally, some days after Blomberg had invited a wide-eyed Göring to ship his rival out of Germany—the Gestapo not only suddenly resumed its interrogations of the blackmailer but also located and began to question the male prostitute involved, Weingärtner.

"I do not know," wrote Fritsch in his own hand a few days later, "from whom the actual initiative came, be it from Hitler, from Göring or Himmler. Whoever it was, the crown witness, who was currently serving time in the Papenburg camp, was immediately produced."

It seems upon deeper analysis unlikely that Göring had initiated the whole fiasco. For him to have started the move against Fritsch as early as December 1937 would imply that he had realized that the Blomberg fiancée was indeed "a whore," and that he had nonetheless allowed himself and Hitler to be made ridiculous by attending her wedding in January.

Overimpetuous this time, Göring jumped bum-deep into this juicy scandal—not suspecting that he would shortly sink in almost up to his neck. He brought the dossier on the "homosexual Fritsch" to Hitler's attention at the same time as that on the Blomberg bride. Hitler told him to question the blackmailer, Schmidt, in person.

Age thirty-one now, the felon was brought into the Göring villa. He had been sentenced to seven years on December 28, 1936, on multiple counts of blackmail, impersonating a police officer, and a variety of homosexual

offenses. General Göring that the dark-haired, sall physiognomy of a crim and Schmidt easily picke the accused general, sayi tified him from pictures; vining enough. "It is q do them the honor of so a believed that the availabl sexual acts."

Such, at any rate, was t in the history of the Gern Wehrmacht adjutant Hos general stormed around i was left to cool his heels where Hitler and Göring

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1937

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once flew to Moscow and returned accompanied by a personal
envoy of Stalin, who presented special credentials from Jezhov,
then Chief of the GPU.

Stalin asked what price we had set on the material. Neither
Hitler nor Heydrich had considered that there would be any
financial prospects in the affair. However, to preserve appearances,
Heydrich asked for three million gold roubles—which Stalin's
emissary, after no more than a cursory examination of the docu-
ments, paid at once.

*

The material against Tukhachevsky was handed over to the
Russians in the middle of May 1937. As is known, the trial of
Tukhachevsky was held in secret. The court was composed
chiefly of Soviet Marshals and Red Army leaders. The indictment
was prepared by a Military Council and the prosecutor was
Andrei Vishinsky.

Tukhachevsky and his fellow-conspirators were arrested on the
evening of June 4, 1937. After he had made an unsuccessful
attempt at suicide, the trial began at ten o'clock on June 11; it
ended at nine o'clock the same evening. According to the *Tass*
dispatches of that day, all the defendants confessed their guilt.
Practically no other details of the case were made public. Vishin-
sky's summing up for the prosecution took barely twenty
minutes. He demanded expulsion of the defendants from the Red
Army and their death by shooting. Sentence was executed four
hours later. On Stalin's orders, Marshal Bluecher (who himself
fell a victim to one of the later purges) commanded the firing
squad. Of the judges of the court, only Voroshilov and Budienny
survive today.

I personally had to destroy most of the three million roubles
paid to us by the Russians, for it was all in bills of high denomina-
tions, the numbers of which had obviously been listed by the
GPU. Whenever one of our agents tried to use them inside the
Soviet Union, he was arrested within a remarkably short time.

Thus the affair of Marshal Tukhachevsky was a preparatory
step towards the *rapprochement* between Hitler and Stalin. It was
the turning point that marked Hitler's decision to secure his
Eastern front by an alliance with Russia, while preparing to attack
the West.

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* @Laurie Stalin would not trust
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junior psychiatrist, Dr. Douglas Kelley, that he had told Hitler von Ribbentrop's act was "like the Soviet ambassador greeting the Führer with a raised fist and yelling, 'Long live the World Revolution!'"¹⁷ No one was more sensitive to British custom than London's young German professional diplomats, though they were not at all concerned about the thousands of German exiles and refugees who now lived hand-to-mouth in London, forced by British immigration policy to take menial jobs in order to be permitted to stay in Britain. Their fate was much more harmful to Germany's reputation than von Ribbentrop's gaffe. Architects were manservants; women university professors were children's nannies.

Everyone in London and Berlin took aim at von Ribbentrop. He had no one to blame but himself. The international businessman, in the guise of ambassador from a violent and revolutionary government, had been trapped by his own vanity and ambition. And those intelligent young German diplomats who worked for him and sat in judgment of him and who were paid by the same fierce master in Berlin, what of them? As Spitzzy put it, "We continued because we were ambitious and enjoyed our careers."¹⁸ Meanwhile, the brouhaha went on and on. There was even an amusing question in Parliament as to why the British ambassador in Berlin should not be instructed to shout "Rule Britannia" every time he saw Adolf Hitler.

Fear that damage may have been done to his standing with Adolf Hitler sent von Ribbentrop into panic. He was isolated from Berlin, where gossip and malice could bring quick reversals to the career of a senior Nazi. For this reason, 1937 became a year of frantic trans-Channel travel to perform "damage control" in Berlin.

The embassy's massive reconstruction was nearing completion just in time for a lavish ball planned for May 12 to celebrate the coronation of George VI and his Queen, Elizabeth. Everyone in London was waiting to see the new Frankfurter Hauptbahnhof (Frankfurt Central Railway Station), as the embassy was known among Mayfair wags.

D-AMY became a veritable taxi. Captain Zivina brought everyone from Baron Steengracht and his beautiful wife, who became Annelies's assistants and helpers because they knew London society, to Rudolf Likus, an old friend of von Ribbentrop's since elementary school days. The semiliterate Likus became his factotum and party contact. To please his friend von Ribbentrop, Himmler made Likus an SS colonel, and he was frequently sent to Berlin as a gossip collector and spy. Dozens of friends and party bigwigs went to and fro. Captain Zivina also ferried custom shirts from the Berlin haberdasher Jacquet and

pent passenger was
in his schedule for

Von Ribbentrop clung to his master, but his absences raised more resentment in London, where it was felt that the Court of St. James's was entitled to more than a part-time ambassador.

Earlier in 1937, on January 30, Hitler had made a Reichstag speech in which he emphasized that there would be "no more surprises," but several major conflicts with Britain remained, such as the colonial question, the Spanish Civil War, and the persecution of the Jews. Added to these was the heightened persecution of the Protestant clergy. On July 1, 1937, Pastor Niemöller was arrested for the fifth time, but this time he was not released after the usual few days of interrogation. The Church of England launched no immediate official complaint. The Anglo-German relationship was sensitive.

The embassy began to make more than the usual routine contacts with Germans who were living in Britain but who were neither Jewish refugees nor non-Jewish political exiles. By German law, every passport-bearing German in Britain, Jewish or not, had to report to the nearest German consulate every six months, or else his passport would be canceled, thereby invalidating his British residential visa. This applied to exiles and "good" German citizens alike, including the hundreds of German domestic servants and waiters who worked in London's hotels, restaurants, and homes. A former Navy captain named Karlova, who worked as the resident SS police agent in the embassy, tried to organize an espionage ring of German servants.¹⁰ Karlova's idea was probably von Ribbentrop's tithe to his friend Himmler, who by then had placed SD (*Sicherheitsdienst*) police agents in all German embassies and missions worldwide.

Captain Karlova also made contact with all German organizations that were not out-and-out Nazi groups. Several old-time German "Kränzchen," coffee-and-cake *gemütlich* associations, were warned of dire consequences for their relatives in Germany unless they "equalized," the Nazi term for becoming National Socialists.

There were thousands of recent German-Jewish exiles in London, most of them still shocked and bewildered by the strange new English world and language, and often degraded into menial jobs. For these people, the obligatory semiannual visits to the German Embassy were like trips to hell. Their German passports carried swastikas on the dull brown cover, and they received no smiles of warmth from the dour German passport clerks. Yet there was no way even the refugees could avoid this unpleasant task, because an invalid passport meant the loss of residency visa or work permit. Still, London's refugees found their own little Germany. Undaunted by what happened to them, they clustered together in middle-class London neighborhoods like Hamp-

May 137

common. Some began to own the famous small restaurant on any Berlin- and Vienna- of German and Austrian schools. At St. Paul's the schoolmates of the son in Hitler.

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can colonies was quite a more hotly pursued by those who claimed them.

Britons who, in letters to the *Times*, advocated their return included Lord Astor, Bishop Carey (he was the chaplain of Eastborne College and principal of Ely Theological College), the Bishop of Southampton (he was the former Bishop of Johannesburg), and Lord David Cecil.¹¹ Most of these men felt it was just and fair play and no reason to go to war.

Two enemies of von Ribbentrop were about to be removed. On February 2 the British ambassador in Berlin, Vansittart's brother-in-law Sir Eric Phipps, a great Nazi antagonist, was posted to Paris. Then the American ambassador, William Dodd, took a leave of absence from his post and did not return, probably in protest against his instructions from Washington to attend the Nürnberg party rally in September. Until then no western ambassadors had attended.

On May 11, 1937, the day before the coronation in London, Sir Nevile Henderson, the new British ambassador to Berlin, submitted his credentials to a very disturbed Adolf Hitler.

The Führer had just learned that the airship *Hindenburg* had burned and crashed in Lakehurst, New Jersey. He told Henderson that several warnings about sabotage had been received.

Now all those in London who wished to appease Hitler, but also those who wanted to delay while Britain rearmed, had the right man. Henderson was a Foreign Office professional like Phipps, but unlike Phipps, Henderson appeared neutral and friendly. He was able to carry out a brief that some described as sympathetic to Nazism and collaborative. Others saw Henderson as the hero who held Hitler at bay while stalling for time so that Britain could rebuild her arsenal and, most important, strengthen her will.

Sir Nevile Henderson was despised by many as Great Britain's "Nazi ambassador," but to others he was the twilight hero of what he himself eventually described as a failed mission. The eagle-nosed, mustachioed, graying Henderson was the quintessential diplomat in looks and action — calm, charming, and stylish. Von Ribbentrop so dreaded any direct contact in Berlin between the new ambassador and the Führer that he tried at once to discredit Henderson in Hitler's eyes, even in small ways. For instance, von Ribbentrop knew perfectly well that Englishmen of the thirties wore chalk-striped suits, brown suede shoes, and carnation boutonnieres in the style of Edward VIII. So it was an obvious act of malice to tell the unworldly Hitler that Henderson was being "disrespectful" when he wore a carnation to meet the Führer. The Führer's limited experience had never presented him with the more stylish manifestations of the extraordinary species known as

June '37

had bombed the German battleship *Deutschland* while she was in their enemy's repair yard on the island of Ibiza, held by Franco's forces. Thirty German sailors were killed. News of this event reached von Ribbentrop, his family, and aides while they were on a golf vacation in Cornwall. It was also at this time that the SS discovered that Thorner, Rudolf's former Hitler Youth supervisor, now von Ribbentrop's London secretary, an SS captain, and Büro employee, had one-eighth Jewish blood. The frightened, shocked, pale Thorner told Spitz behind locked doors about this disaster and his immediate discharge from the SS, which would lead to his removal from his London post. Von Ribbentrop, who was usually loyal to subordinates, attended the opening of the Dresden Autobahn on June 25 and persuaded the Führer to be generous with Thorner "due to years of membership and Hitler Youth duty." "The Führer 'graciously permitted Thorner's transfer to the embassy in Stockholm.'"

Obviously, even Hitler did not wish to interfere with many decisions of the SS, which was rapidly growing into a separate state, a reservoir of Teutonic myth. The short, owl-like Himmler, as unlikely a physical specimen as his Führer, was just as besotted with the notion of the tall, blond, blue-eyed Aryan. As if to frustrate Himmler, even the tall, blond Reinhard Heydrich, his monstrous chief of the Gestapo, whom he considered the perfect Aryan specimen, was known to have vast hips and a fat rear. He was also said to have Jewish blood.

During July von Ribbentrop spent some time in Britain, because his assistants at the embassy had heard too many rumblings from affronted Whitehall. Meanwhile, his Japanese friends chose that July to launch a massive attack on China. Following an armed clash — or "incident," as international politics would have it — on Marco Polo Bridge in Peking, they seized the old Imperial capital as well as Tientsin. Chinese troops soon abandoned the port of Shanghai to the Japanese, who then attacked British and American ships near Nan-king. The American gunboat *Panay* was sunk with a loss of American lives. Apologies were offered by the Japanese government and restitution paid, but it was the beginning of Japan's road to war with the west. In London, von Ribbentrop was visited by a young Japanese diplomat, dispatched from Berlin by Japanese Ambassador Mushakoji. Von Ribbentrop, very much out of the picture, asked, "Will the Japanese soon defeat the Chinese?" and received a polite Japanese nonreply.

Kordt and his Foreign Ministry associates were now witnesses to a power play within the Japanese government parallel to their own. Their Japanese counterparts in London told them that the Japanese

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August 3, 1937

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Aug '37

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Foreign Ministry was rapidly losing its control of policy, and nation-
alist politicians and the military were taking charge. A friend of
Kordt's at the Japanese Embassy launched into uncharacteristically
frank complaints about the situation in Tokyo, but von Ribbentrop
remained totally unaware. He was concentrating on his empty seat
"at court" in Berlin. His old elementary school friend from Metz, the
party hack SS Colonel Likus, had become a fixture at the embassy but
could do little to reinforce him in absentia. It was important for von
Ribbentrop to be physically present in the anteroom of the Chancel-
lery in Berlin each day before 2 P.M. That was when Hitler usually
appeared and chose his luncheon companions by pointing at those
waiting for "the call." "You, Herr X, sit on my right, and you, General
Y, on my left, and the rest of you gentlemen may choose your own
seating." Those who were named were deemed to be in special favor,
but one had to be present to get chosen.¹⁷

In August the von Ribbentrops reluctantly decided to take a short
vacation in Britain. No doubt the ambassador would rather have been
in Berlin.

August 3, 1937

To Führer and Foreign Minister

According to permission given me by the Führer [I am] going to
Scotland to regain my health. I intend to stay in Scotland in August to
be available in case of developments in nonintervention matter. End
of August I shall be in London for a short stay and then go to
Germany to undergo cure. Minister Woermann will represent me.
Assuming that the Führer and Foreign Minister agree, I shall then give
personal report from Berlin.

Ribbentrop

(handwritten) note R567G

*We request that day of beginning and end of vacation be given to
us by embassy.*

Bavarian Vacation: Feldafing,
Hotel Empress Elisabeth, near Starnberg.¹⁸

They motored to Gleneagles in Scotland in two Mercedes behe-
moths. One of the cars developed some mechanical problems, so the
three-motor D-AMY flew from London to Germany to take aboard a
Mercedes mechanic. The other plane passenger was SS General Wolff,
Heinrich Himmler's aide, requested by von Ribbentrop for "important
consultations."¹⁹ It must be assumed that von Ribbentrop wanted to

Sept 137



reinforce his conduit to Heinrich Himmler and that Wolff's trip was probably trumped up. The landing of the large, lumbering D-AMY on a small Scottish airfield apparently caused eyes to pop. Actually the plane was ideal for the purpose, slow and powerful. For this reason, the JU-52 became Germany's main troop transport and parachute plane.

In mid-August, unable to stay away any longer from his Führer's side, von Ribbentrop brought his family and part of his staff to the hotel at Feldafing on Starnberg Lake, near Berchtesgaden and the Berghof. They continued their vacation, except for a trip to the Navy port of Kiel for the funeral of recently promoted Admiral Wassner, the true architect of the Naval Agreement. Then a short trip to Stuttgart to meet the *Auslandsdeutsche*, delegations of "German-blooded" people from all over the world. Von Ribbentrop was busy looking busy. (The *Auslandsdeutsche*, people of German descent who lived abroad, became Hitler's constant excuse to interfere with other countries. They were all *his* Germans. Today this heritage has come to haunt the German Federal Republic, which would probably prefer to think of them as foreigners.)

The 1937 party rally in Nürnberg began on September 8, and, to the joy of Adolf Hitler and Joseph Goebbels, the two leading western ambassadors did attend. Sir Nevile Henderson, Neville Chamberlain's new Berlin "accommodator," signaled his acceptance, and in order to "keep the appearance of solidarity," André François-Poncet of France also attended. The disgusted departure of Ambassador Dodd left the new American ambassador, Hugh Wilson, not yet willing to accept, though he was authorized to do so.

Henderson and François-Poncet agreed to limit themselves to two days in Nürnberg. (The full rally lasted a week.) Their reactions were divergent. Henderson, a newcomer to Nazi Germany, thought the rally "indescribably picturesque, of grandiose beauty. Hess, aloof and inscrutable. Supper in the SS tent sinister and menacing. For Hitler: [The Germans had] idolatry."³⁰

François-Poncet was not overwhelmed. Long familiar with Adolf Hitler and the National Socialist style, he was the "featured" speaker at a reception for foreign diplomats at the Hotel Deutscher Hof. He told Hitler, in front of the other diplomats, "Your propaganda minister must be wrong, because you invited us despite the fact that Goebbels said we, the democratic peoples, are calves who chose their own butcher."³¹ François-Poncet was quoting an excerpt from a Goebbels warm-up speech at the beginning of the rally. Goebbels fumed. Hitler grinned.

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As usual, the rally had a theme; Goebbels had named the 1937 event the Rally of Labor. It became the stage for announcing the Four-Year Economic Reconstruction and Rearmament Plan, slated to be administered by Hermann Göring.

As soon as the Nürnberg rally ended, von Ribbentrop rushed back to Berlin. His next plan did not include London. Mussolini was on his way to pay a five-day state visit to his ally, Germany, which would precede the signing of von Ribbentrop's Anti-Comintern Pact, supposedly now a powerful bloc comprising Germany, Italy, and Japan. For von Ribbentrop the foremost aim was the building of these political blocs. Hitler thought in terms of an ideological brotherhood of National Socialism, Fascism, and *bushido*. For him power-bloc thinking was reactionary and dated, but he decided to humor his touchy adviser. Whitehall's patience was wearing thin. Why should the ambassador to Great Britain dance attendance on Italy's chief of state? But von Ribbentrop paid no attention.

At 9 A.M. on September 25 the special train carrying the Duce, accompanied by his tomcat foreign minister and son-in-law Count Ciano, known as the Ducellini, arrived in Munich. The train also carried Dino Alfieri, his propaganda minister, and one hundred of the Duce's staff.

After a visit to Hitler's private apartment on Prinzregentenplatz, Mussolini, the man who had first used the term Axis, was presented with an immense parade of SA and SS on Königsplatz, the open Munich square. Mussolini was trying to be "more Prussian than the Prussians" in his newly designed, ribbon-encrusted uniform.³³ In Bologna he had bragged about the "olive branch of peace growing from a forest of eight million bayonets." He had seemingly overcome his 1934 disdain for Germany's Führer and had told John Whitaker, of the *New York Herald Tribune*, that he would "invite Hitler to make Austria German."

There was no doubt in von Ribbentrop's mind. He had to be there. He had to be part of the event. This was history in the making. The stakes were high and the penalty for absence was steep. The fact that he was still ambassador to Great Britain and that the proper escort for Mussolini and Ciano was Germany's ambassador to Italy, Ulrich von Hassel, gave him no pause. He hounded Mussolini and his aides for the full five days of their state visit. From Munich to Essen to Berlin he chased after them by supercharged Mercedes or on one of the special trains.³⁴ His chauffeur, Brütgam, was ordered to cut in ahead of von Hassel's Mercedes when everyone was traveling in convoy. At Mecklenburg they watched Army maneuvers. At Swine-

Sept 37

münde there were mock naval attacks. At Essen, the Krupp works displayed their weapon-building steel muscles. Von Ribbentrop was always right there. Then, finally, on to Berlin on September 28. For the last few kilometers to the capital, Mussolini's and Hitler's special trains ran precisely side by side on twin tracks in a dazzling theatrical demonstration of parallel Italo-German aims and loyalties.

Six hundred and fifty thousand Berliners assembled on the May Field outside the Olympic Stadium to hear Hitler and his top dignitaries declare their faith and trust, a marriage of Fascia and Swastika.¹⁴ When it was Mussolini's turn to speak from the thirty-five-foot-high concrete podium, the heavens opened up in a deluge of September rain. Within minutes Mussolini's notes lay dissolved in soggy tatters. His uniform was soaked, and the water-logged microphones projected only high-pitched gibberish while the Roman dictator gesticulated wildly. Had they not been drenched and standing in mud, the cynical Berliners would have had a hard time suppressing their laughter. It was a good thing the flagpole with Hitler's *Standarte* was manned by sailors who were used to the soaking.

The way back to Berlin became a nightmare of jammed traffic and mud-spattered sliding and tottering dignitaries from generals to Gauleiters trying to find their parked, mired cars. Annelies von Ribbentrop was never even able to leave her big Mercedes stuck in a muddy parking lot at the edge of the May Field. She was supposed to have joined Joachim. Her husband went back to Berlin in a car Spitzzy requisitioned from a minor party functionary by howling at the top of his lungs in the Prussian military manner about the importance of his Chief, the Ambassador Extraordinary and SS General. Among the sopping dignitaries was Franz von Papen, dressed in a Kaiser-era uniform with all his World War decorations and sashes. On his head he wore an old-fashioned, spiked helmet. Göring greeted him with an ironic "Heil, Herr Old Reichs Chancellor!"

Mussolini as honored guest was quartered in the former Presidential Palace, once the crown prince's. When the shivering Mussolini asked for a hot bath, he found out that Prussian efficiency was not infallible. There was no hot water for the lavish rococo bathtub. *Freddo, freddo, freddissimo!* was the plaintive call of the Duce's aides. The drenched and freezing Mussolini had to take a frigid bath before rushing for his mountainous and regal bed.¹⁵

Despite this minor failure, Mussolini was impressed by Hitler's ways. He returned to Rome with some poisonous souvenirs. He would

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His oldest Fascist associates were aghast. Even the most banal of Nazi manifestations were resisted. The goose step, or *Parademarsch*, now became the *Passo Romano*. His most heroic soldier, Marshal Emilio de Bono, protested, "Since the average height of the Italian soldier is five foot five, we shall have an army of stiff-necked dwarfs!"¹⁶

The advent of anti-Semitic laws raised a much bigger furor. Many Italian Jews were old Fascists and supporters of Mussolini, and Italians were by nature brotherly with their Jewish compatriots. Many Italian-Jewish families dated from the days of the Roman Empire. In a demonstration of protest, Marshal Balbo, Italy's air hero, famed pilot, and one of Mussolini's closest friends, flew himself from Libya to Ferrara. In that ancient center of distinguished Italian Jewry, he made it a point to visit every leading Jew and then to dine with Ferrara's Jewish mayor in the city's finest restaurant.¹⁷

A veritable deluge of Italian decorations accompanied Mussolini's visit to Germany. Even the hall porter at the Hotel Vier Jahreszeiten in Munich was awarded a knightly cross.¹⁸

The von Ribbentrops and their retinue returned to London on September 30. Once more, it was a short visit. Other matters were in the offing elsewhere. First, the signing by Italy of the Anti-Comintern Pact — now, with Japan, a three-power agreement — was to take place. The Ribbentrop Büro's clever Herr von Raumer, whose research had originally produced the technicality that removed the Anti-Comintern Pact from being a virtual declaration of war on Russia, was still the pact's chief architect.

On October 4 von Ribbentrop was in Berlin. He stormed over to London on the fifteenth and then immediately back to Berlin, to the Berghof, and finally to Rome. The meetings with Mussolini and Duce Ciano went smoothly, and all was prepared for the gala signing, scheduled for early November in Rome.

Next, no sooner had Rome said "si!" when von Ribbentrop again rushed back to Berlin, there to protect the tenuous bond originally tied with the help of the late Ambassador von Hösch at an Emerald Cunard soirée, where von Ribbentrop had met the famous couple now known as the Windsors.¹⁹ Their 1937 trip to Germany had been arranged by a charming but shady Franco-American then called Charles Bedaux, an expert in industrial efficiency, whose automated production systems were said to have been the inspiration for Charlie

Chaplin's film *Modern Times*. Bedaux had advised German industry for years. Surprisingly, although they were not intimate friends, the Windsors had accepted Bedaux's offer of his château in France for their wedding and honeymoon.

The Windsors ostensibly wished to study social conditions in the "new" Germany. Dudley Forwood, the duke's aide, said that the German-speaking Duke of Windsor was fully aware of the potential for Nazi propaganda and was extremely careful.⁴⁰ He even avoided any arm gesture that might have been photographed to resemble the Nazi salute. Still, some reporters made the unlikely claim that he rendered a full Nazi salute to Adolf Hitler and to a Death's Head SS parade.⁴¹ True or false, the resultant uproar forced the Windsors to cancel a trip they had planned to the United States.

By the time von Ribbentrop saw them in Berlin, the Windsors had already visited the Berghof for tea with Hitler. Paul Schmidt, the interpreter, reported that the duke had been noncommittal to the Führer. Forwood reported that when the duke criticized something, an interpreter gently modified it for Hitler to avoid annoying the Führer. The duke then shouted in German, "*Falsch übersetzt!*" (Wrong translation!)⁴² In Berlin the von Ribbentrops gave a dinner for the Windsors at Horcher's. The other guests were the Himmlers, Marianne Hoppe, a well-known film actress, and Gustav Gründgens, the famous actor and Nazi puppet on whom the 1930 film *Mephisto* was based. The duke, on being introduced, gently tapped his heels together in the old-fashioned, pre-Nazi manner, which amused some of the Nazis.⁴³ They considered it "reactionary."

Von Ribbentrop made a token return to London on October 26 for two events: the first was the opening of Parliament, which foreign ambassadors viewed from a special gallery. At noon exactly, the slow procession of the royals, with Lord Halifax carrying the Sword of State with his one and only hand, moved through the sea of robed peers. According to Chips Channon, the King had overcome his stammer and spoke well. Then came a session of the Nonintervention Committee with all of its empty discussions. The die had long before been cast in Spain, and Franco was winning. Germany and Italy were helping and the Russians were withdrawing their support from the Republicans. It was a heartbreaking time for the many international volunteers, like America's Abraham Lincoln Brigade, fighting on the side of the Loyalists. Ernest Hemingway learned firsthand the price paid by those who hesitated to oppose the appetites of dictators. François-Poncet once described Hitler as a *Nimmersatt*, the German word for someone who is insatiable, and Mussolini had already begun

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his own masticative process in Ethiopia.⁴⁴ Now both he and Hitler sharpened their appetites for future feasts by joining hands over Franco Spain. For these two it was to be what François-Poncet called a fatal friendship. Mussolini's early unpunished aggression in Africa encouraged Hitler. Hitler's unopposed threats to the western powers misled Mussolini. Only Franco remained the enigma among the dictators. Adopting all the usual fascist trappings, including the raised-arm salute, he established an absolutist regime and kept it out of World War II. He guided it through the very decades when dictatorships in Germany, Italy, and Japan were crushed, toward constitutional monarchy and then democracy. During World War II he rejected any major collaboration with Hitler or Mussolini, with the exception of a limited number of volunteers. He kept his borders inviolate and permitted no back-door access to the Mediterranean, the Atlantic, or to vital Gibraltar. He so exasperated Hitler that even Goebbels, in sheer disgust, condemned Franco throughout his diary.

To prepare the way for von Ribbentrop's Italo-Japanese Anti-Comintern plans, Hitler ordered withdrawal of all help to Chiang Kai-shek's China. Germany was now in Japan's camp.

On November 4, a Friday, von Ribbentrop arrived in Rome. Foreign Ministry officer Prince Philipp of Hesse* had returned from Rome after testing the waters for Hitler. He had succeeded with Mussolini but encountered some reluctance from Ciano, who was not prepared to trust this von Ribbentrop out-of-channels treaty. For the same reason, the Ambassador Ulrich von Hassel had gone to Berlin to get clarification. Von Neurath and the ministry were wary of the entire Anti-Comintern Pact. They were afraid Germany might bind herself to the adventures of her new cosignatory. Besides, it was not *their* idea, and a depressed von Hassel told Kordt that no one had been able to stem the flow of events. Hitler was in favor of the pact. Von Ribbentrop had gained his victory over the professionals. To assuage the old diplomat von Hassel, Kordt pointed out that the treaty "contained mainly nonsense." Von Hassel agreed. Nevertheless, he worried about the future undertakings of Italy and Japan.

Among von Ribbentrop's Berlin allies for the Anti-Comintern Pact was Ambassador Walther Hewel, the charming and skilled diplomat whom von Ribbentrop had appointed as the Büro's liaison man at the

*Philipp was of the minor branch of the family of Prince Lu Hessen, who served in the embassy under von Ribbentrop. Philipp was married to Princess Mafalda of Savoy and was therefore the Italian King's son-in-law. He was used by Hitler as a contact with Rome. He probably had ambitions to climb above his secondary Hessian status.

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Reichs Chancellery. Adolf Hitler was extremely fond of Hewel, but Hewel stayed a loyal subordinate of von Ribbentrop's. He reassured von Ribbentrop that Adolf Hitler favored the Anti-Comintern Pact in spite of von Neurath's opposition.

The pact was duly signed on November 6 in Rome, and the large state dinner that followed involved the Special Ambassador Extraordinary in a battle of precedence with Ambassador von Hassel, who was technically *in loco* Germany's head of state. To complicate things, Rudolf Hess arrived from Berlin. Hess was senior to von Ribbentrop within the Nazi Party, since the Büro was technically part of Hess's Deputy of the Führer organization.

The Italian protocol people enjoyed much glee while watching the German titans in undignified combat over precedence. They then tactfully solved the dilemma by deciding on round tables without seating by rank. These small skirmishes between old and new were constant, and Adolf Hitler relished them. He was getting his revenge over the Prussians and their aristocracy. Potsdam lay far behind.

The euphoric events of Rome made von Ribbentrop careless. On several occasions he had said publicly that he was destined to become foreign minister in 1938, when von Neurath's age would force his retirement. He did not know that Hitler had given von Neurath his personal assurances that in his case the age limit would be waived. Ambassador von Hassel immediately informed von Neurath of von Ribbentrop's Roman indiscretions, and when von Ribbentrop returned to Munich, expecting his Führer's enthusiastic congratulations, he was pointedly ignored and had to stay in his hotel, cooling his heels. He had no warning that a rockslide of anger was about to come down on him. When von Ribbentrop was finally ordered to report to his Führer at 9 A.M. on November 8 at the Führer's private apartment on Prinzregentenplatz, he and his secretary, Spitzky, both wearing full black SS uniforms complete with dress swords, arrived punctually. Von Ribbentrop received a vicious and audible tongue lashing behind the Führer's closed study door. Hitler was furious because von Ribbentrop had bragged that he would soon be foreign minister. Hitler asked, "*Was bilden Sie sich eigentlich ein?*" which is the German equivalent of "Who the hell do you think you are?" He continued, "No, Herr von Ribbentrop. We don't behave that way! And particularly not in front of foreigners!"

A whipped, wounded, and meek von Ribbentrop beat a hasty retreat to the Hotel Vier Jahreszeiten, where he retired to the safety of his bed in a darkened room, suffering a heavy attack of "Tango

Nocturno."⁴⁵ Acco was all finished" as he asked Spitzky to enthusiastic about answer.⁴⁶ A lengthy of the ambassador following day.

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ments. However, it became the *bête noire* of German diplomats, who often heard about it from their foreign colleagues.

According to the German military agenda, there actually was a secret review of Case Green at the War Ministry on December 21, 1937. Case Green was the code name for the eventual invasion of Czechoslovakia.

Early in December in London von Ribbentrop was a brief and perfunctory speaker at the London meeting of the Anglo-German Fellowship, attended by the usual group and also by the unlikely Sir Robert Vansittart. Von Ribbentrop's attention was diverted by the visit which Lord Halifax, one of the participants at the dinner, had just made to Adolf Hitler at the Berghof, with von Neurath in attendance. Von Ribbentrop knew none of the meeting's agenda, and it took a full month before he had to embarrass himself by requesting a report from von Neurath. Hitler had not asked von Ribbentrop, his "England expert," to attend the Halifax meeting, nor had he responded to a request for an audience in early January. From November 1937 until February 1938 von Ribbentrop was clearly a man out of his master's favor, and Adolf Hitler was eager to mollify von Neurath.

Others had absolutely no problem learning about the Halifax-Hitler meeting. On December 5, 1937, Chips Channon's diary reported:

I had a long conversation with Lord Halifax about Germany and his recent visit. He described Hitler's appearance, his khaki shirt, black breeches, and patent leather evening shoes [*sic*]. He told me he liked all the Nazi leaders, even Goebbels, and he was very much impressed, interested, and amused by the visit. He thinks the regime absolutely fantastic, perhaps even too fantastic to be taken seriously. But he is very glad that he went, and thinks good may come of it. I was rivetted by all he said and reluctant to let him go.¹⁷

Channon made no comment of his own.

Von Ribbentrop's days as Hitler's favorite now seemed to be numbered, and von Neurath was someone Hitler was not ready to discard. That chance would soon come, brought on by a series of events that once and for all let Hitler vent his hatred of most aristocrats, particularly those in the Foreign Ministry. He was sure the nobles had always been his enemies. Along with Jews, Bolsheviks, and Masons, *Die Reaktion*, the reactionaries, were the objects of his most bitter ideological enmity. There were those words in the Nazi Party's anthem,

"The Horst Wessel erschossen . . ." (C the reactionaries).

Meanwhile, the Führer's rejections, "The poor Führer l teurs."¹⁸

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because he was too friendly to Germany. "We must think of England as our most dangerous enemy."

While he slaved over this paper, helped only by his wife, Adolf Hitler and Benito Mussolini prepared a new and harsher plan for future international dealings. On December 11 Mussolini's Italy withdrew forever from the League of Nations, and Hitler announced that Germany would never again return to Geneva.

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of the change which was more and more marked in him. Heinrich Hoffmann had just put out a new edition of his book, *Hitler, wie ihn keiner kennt* (*The Hitler Nobody Knows*). The old edition had to be withdrawn because of a picture showing Hitler amicably together with Roehm, whom he was shortly afterward to kill. Hitler himself selected the new photos. They showed a casual, good-natured private individual in leather shorts, in a rowboat, stretched out on meadows, hiking, surrounded by enthusiastic young people, or in artists' studios. He was always seen relaxed, friendly, and accessible. The book proved to be Hoffmann's greatest success. But it was already out of date by the time it was published. For the genial, relaxed Hitler whom I too had known in the early thirties had become, even to his intimate entourage, a forbidding despot with few human relationships.

In the Ostertal, a remote mountain valley in the Bavarian Alps, I had located a small hunting lodge, big enough to set up drawing boards, which with a bit of crowding could accommodate my family and a few associates. There, in the spring of 1935, we worked away at my plans for Berlin. That was a happy period for my work and for the family. But one day I made a crucial error; I told Hitler about this idyll. His response was: "Why, you can have all that and more near me. I'll put the Bechstein house* at your disposal. There's ample room for your office there in the conservatory." (At the end of May 1937 we moved from the Bechstein house into a studio building which Hitler had Bormann build from my design.) Thus I became the fourth "Obersalzberger," along with Hitler, Goering, and Bormann.

Naturally I was happy to be granted so obvious a distinction and be admitted to the most intimate circle. But I soon came to realize that the change had not been exactly advantageous. From the solitary mountain valley we passed into an area guarded by a high barbed-wire fence which could be entered only after identity checks at two gates. It was reminiscent of an open-air enclosure for wild animals. Curiosity-seekers were always trying to catch a glimpse of some of the prominent inhabitants of the mountain.

Bormann was the real master of Obersalzberg. He forcibly bought

*A villa near Hitler's residence at Obersalzberg, formerly owned by his friends, the Bechsteins.

up centuries-old farms and was done to the numerous parishes. He also com- reached from the top of hundred feet high, to the and embraced an area of 2 area was almost two mil- long.

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up centuries-old farms and had the buildings torn down. The same was done to the numerous votive chapels, despite the objections of the parishes. He also confiscated state forests, until the private area reached from the top of the mountain, which was some sixty-four hundred feet high, to the valley at an altitude of two thousand feet, and embraced an area of 2.7 square miles. The fence around the inner area was almost two miles long, around the outer area nine miles long.

With total insensitivity to the natural surroundings, Bormann laid out a network of roads through this magnificent landscape. He turned forest paths, hitherto carpeted by pine needles and penetrated by roots, into paved promenades. A barracks, a vast garage building, a hotel for Hitler's guests, a new manor house, a complex for the constantly growing number of employees, sprang up as rapidly as in a suddenly fashionable resort. Dormitory barracks for hundreds of construction workers clung to the slopes; trucks loaded with building materials rumbled along the roads. At night the various building sites glowed with light, for work went on in two shifts, and occasionally detonations thundered through the valley.

On the top of Hitler's private mountain Bormann erected a house that was luxuriously furnished in a somewhat rusticated ocean-liner style. You reached it by a precipitous road that ended in an elevator blasted into the rock. Bormann squandered between twenty and thirty million marks merely on the access route to this eyrie, which Hitler visited only a few times. Cynics in Hitler's entourage remarked: "Bormann has created a gold-rush town atmosphere. Only he doesn't find any, he spends it." Hitler regretted the hubbub but commented: "It's Bormann's doing; I don't want to interfere." Another time he said: "When it's all finished I'll look for a quiet valley and build another small wooden house there like the first." It never was finished. Bormann conceived a never-ending succession of new roads and buildings, and when the war finally broke out he began building underground quarters for Hitler and his entourage.

The gigantic installations on the mountain were, in spite of Hitler's occasional sarcasms about the tremendous effort and expenditure, characteristic of the change in the Fuehrer's style of life and also indicative of his tendency to withdraw more and more from the wider world around him. Fear of assassination cannot explain it, for almost daily he allowed thousands of people to enter the protected

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INSIDE THE THIRD REICH 102 L

area to pay homage to him. His entourage considered such behavior more dangerous than spontaneous strolls on public forest paths.

In the summer of 1935 Hitler had decided to enlarge his modest country house into one more suitable for his public duties, to be known as the Berghof. He paid for the project out of his own money, but that was nothing but a gesture, since Bormann drew upon other sources for the subsidiary buildings, sums disproportionately greater than the amount Hitler himself provided.

Hitler did not just sketch the plans for the Berghof. He borrowed drawing board, T-square, and other implements from me to draw the ground plan, renderings, and cross sections of his building to scale, refusing any help with the matter. There were only two other designs on which Hitler expended the personal care that he applied to his Obersalzberg house: that of the new Reich war flag and his own standard as Chief of State.

Most architects will put a wide variety of ideas down on paper, and see which lends itself best to further development. It was characteristic of Hitler that he regarded his first inspiration as intuitively right and drew it with little hesitation. Afterward, he introduced only small retouchings to eliminate glaring defects.

The old house was preserved within the new one, whose living room joined the old through a large opening. The resultant ground plan was most impractical for the reception of official visitors. Their staffs had to be content with an unprepossessing entry hall which also led to the toilets, stairwell, and the large dining room.

During official conferences Hitler's private guests were banished to the upper floor. But since the stairs led down to the entry hall, private visitors had to be cleared by a guard before being allowed to go through the room and leave the house for a walk.

A huge picture window in the living room, famous for its size and the fact that it could be lowered, was Hitler's pride. It offered a view of the Untersberg, Berchtesgaden, and Salzburg. However, Hitler had been inspired to situate his garage underneath this window; when the wind was unfavorable, a strong smell of gasoline penetrated into the living room. All in all, this was a ground plan that would have been graded D by any professor at an institute of technology. On the other hand, these very clumsinesses gave the Berghof a strongly personal note. The place was still geared to the simple ac-

103 Obersal

tivities of a former war portions.

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Hitler praised Bormann how Bormann had passed the difficult year of 1933 for all party members considerably exceeded was able to use the his bit to eliminate Hitler. He found two sources:

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could, and the symptoms abated. To avoid offending Hitler, I pretended that I was carefully following Morell's instructions, and since my health improved I became for a time Morell's showpiece. Hitler also had him examine Eva Braun. Afterward she told me that he was disgustingly dirty and vowed that she would not let Morell treat her again.

Hitler's health improved only temporarily. But he would no longer part with his personal physician. On the contrary, Morell's country house on Schwanenwerder Island near Berlin became the goal of Hitler's teatime visits more and more frequently. It was the only place outside the Chancellery that continued to attract him. He visited Dr. Goebbels's very rarely and came to my place at Schlachtensee only once, to see the house I had built for myself.

From the end of 1937 on, when Morell's treatments began to fail, Hitler resumed his old laments. Even as he gave assignments and discussed plans, he would occasionally add: "I don't know how long I am going to live. Perhaps most of these buildings will be finished only after I am no longer here. . . ." The date for the completion of many of the major buildings had been fixed between 1945 and 1950. Evidently Hitler was counting on only a few more years of life. Another example: "Once I leave here . . . I shall not have much more time." In private one of his standard remarks became: "I shall not live much longer. I always counted on having time to realize my plans. I must carry them out myself. None of my successors will have the force to. I must carry out my aims as long as I can hold up, for my health is growing worse all the time."

On May 2, 1938, Hitler drew up his personal will. He had already outlined his political testament on November 5, 1937, in the presence of the Foreign Minister and the military heads of the Reich. In that speech, he referred to his extensive plans for conquest as a "testamentary bequest in case of my decease." With his intimate entourage, who night after night had to watch trivial operetta movies and listen to endless tirades on the Catholic Church, diet recipes, Greek temples, and police dogs, he did not reveal how literally he took his dream of world dominion. Many of Hitler's former associates have since attempted to establish the theory that Hitler changed in 1938. They attribute the change to his deteriorated health resulting from Morell's treatment. It seems to me, on the contrary, that Hitler's plans and aims never changed. Sickness and the fear of death merely made

Jan 23, 1937

Goebbels

222 III: THE REICH MINISTER

Predatory females cluster around him there.⁴⁸ He drives out some frosty nights to the new house at Lanke, explaining to his diary 'nobody is waiting for me in Berlin.'⁴⁹

Jan
23.

Magda and Hitler return to the capital together on the twenty-third. All this sets tongues wagging. Gossip queen Bella Fromm, still holding out in Berlin, records privately that Goebbels has been seen hanging around some pretty low dives, and that Magda now has a list of more than thirty women he has slept with.⁵⁰ Magda's closeness to Hitler also attracts salacious comment, and after Werner Count von Alvensleben lets slip an incautious remark about her, her children, and her Führer, Goebbels complains to Hitler and has the count, spluttering denials, whisked off to concentration camp.⁵¹ Shortly the police tell Goebbels that his cook Martha has been gossiping too, and she is sacked without notice. 'Let's hope she hasn't done any harm already,' he writes, while entrusting no details to his diary.

It is of relevance to examine his views on divorce and adultery at this time. Hitler takes a more liberal view of divorce than Goebbels.⁵² Goebbels instinctively opposes it, although he feels that most party wives are 'too thick to hang on to their husbands.'⁵³ There are strains of catholic puritanism in him. When his young sister, still in her twenties, begins dating a divorced film producer of forty-five, Max Kimmich, he has detectives discreetly check the man's background. 'It's okay,' he writes after hearing their report. 'Maria can fall in love with him.'⁵⁴ Preferring double standards to single, he spends nights out at Lanke ('gossiping and laziness'), and days discussing the new laws with Hitler. He proposes that couples be forced to wait a year after filing for divorce—this cooling-off period will save many faltering marriages.⁵⁵ But in his diary are many unconscious hints at his own activities. He criticizes theater director Eugen Klöpfer for his womanizing: 'The theater is not a free-for-all for girl-snatchers,' he huffs.⁵⁶ Even more hypocritically he lectures the incorrigible Walter Grantzow for falling in love with 'some starlet,' and now wanting to dump his wife.⁵⁷

His stand on adultery is no less self-serving. When the minister of the interior Wilhelm Frick, a pettifogging lawyer whom Goebbels detests, proposes with almost Islamic fervor ten-year jail terms for adultery, Goebbels snorts: 'Then let them begin retroactively with Frick.' That night he drives scriptwriter Thea von Harbou (the lovely wife of Fritz Lang) home; and what right have we to doubt that she only 'tells me of her new film plans'?⁵⁸ He tells Hitler that neither divorce nor adultery is any concern of the public prosecutor. Hitler promises that he will shoot down Frick's draconian proposals on adultery. At the end of 1937, when adultery again comes before the Cabinet, Goebbels is still fighting. 'Finally,' he records, 'we agree: prison sentences only if demanded by the wronged husband and in the public interest.' The same Cabinet session decides that any rape committed by a Jew shall be a capital offense.⁵⁹ During these debates, the diaries' entries glimpse Joseph Goebbels driving the two Höpfner sisters out to Lanke in the snow: Then

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Jan 30, 1937

FEMME FATALE 223

castigating a chastened actress, Marie-Louise Claudius, for indiscreet remarks: Then assisting the beautiful Brigitte Horney with her foreign-currency problems: Then receiving the no less shapely actress Gina Falckenberg for a script discussion session ('I can help her too').⁶⁰

After a difficult confinement Magda gives birth on February 19, two months prematurely. The gynecologist says that the sickly little newcomer, another girl, is truly *holde*, sweet; and they leave her with this name. 'Just what I wanted,' cries Helga, cradling her baby sister. 'It came down from the clouds!' Magda lies amid her pillows, tired and happy, and her large dreamy eyes fill with tears as her (cuckolded?) husband limps in.⁶¹

NONE of the Goebbels children would be baptized. Goebbels had declared open war on the church. When the devoutly catholic post-office minister, Eltz von Rübenach, turned down Hitler's gift of party membership, made to all the non-party ministers on January 30, 1937, explaining that he could not join a party that oppressed the church, it was Dr Goebbels who indignantly orchestrated his colleagues' demand for Eltz's resignation.⁶² Hitler however was one of the few Nazi leaders who still paid the ten percent church levy on their income, and he saw no point in stirring up a hornets' nest.⁶³ It was not that he admired the churches. He commented to Goebbels that they had imbued modern man with a fear of death that his ancestors had never known.⁶⁴ But he was a pragmatist. Twice in February 1937 he called conferences at the Berghof on the inter-confessional disputes, to which he invited Goebbels along with Frick, Hess, and Himmler. On the first occasion he explained that the Reich had to avoid needless discord, since he expected a full-scale world war within a few years.⁶⁵ At the second conference he again predicted 'a great world conflict' in five or six years' time. 'Germany,' he told his colleagues, 'will prevail in a coming battle, or no longer survive.' 'What a genius the Führer truly is,' he wrote, setting all this down for posterity.⁶⁶

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1937

27: The Round Table

HE was now in his fortieth year. The three years before war broke out would show him at his most innovative as minister. He laid the foundations of an imaginative welfare scheme for Germany's elderly stars of stage and screen.¹ He put his ministry's top officials into blue-collar jobs for two months to gain experience in industry.² He created the hugely successful traveling exhibition of degenerate works of art confiscated from galleries and museums. Despite Hitler's strictures he initiated a pitiless campaign of legal repression against church officials, and he maintained his very personal vendetta against the Jews. He bought up Germany's biggest film studios in a determined attempt to take on Hollywood. He consolidated his hold on the printed and broadcast word, though he never truly controlled the newspapers. And all the time he fine-tuned the propaganda weapon for Hitler's coming wars of conquest.

His was the sharpest tongue in town. 'I've got three men,' Hitler would say, 'who just can't stop laughing when they're sitting down together.'³ He was referring to Hoffmann, Amann, and Goebbels. At the chancellery's round table the propaganda minister, whom he dubbed the 'chief jester' of the Third Reich, usually sat directly opposite him.⁴ Only Goebbels had the nerve and wit to interrupt his monologues.⁵ Confident of his personal status, he was merciless toward the other guests. 'Well, Tiny,' he would greet Winifred Wagner's oafish daughter Friedelind, 'as fat and dumb and lazy and gluttonous as ever?'⁶ When the malodorous Otto Dietrich remarked that the best ideas always came to him in the bath-tub, Goebbels piped up: 'Then you must have good ideas more often, Dr Dietrich!'⁷ Once, Viktoria von Dirksen, outraged by a Goebbels barb, appealed: 'Mein Führer, tell your minister to shut up!' (Hitler lapsed into Viennese dialect, grinned, and directed Goebbels to change the subject).⁸ Magda, the common object of their affections, winced at his cruel wit.⁹ After ordering the summary arrest of all astrologers, magnetopaths, and other occultists he would scoff: 'Remarkably enough not one of these clairvoyants foresaw that he was about to be arrested.'¹⁰

Those of his victims who fought back lived to regret it. Once 'Putzi' Hanfstaengl read out to the round table a Goebbels press announcement praising 'the eternal immortality of the German people.' 'Don't you worry about my style,' snapped Goebbels. 'With my style I have conquered Germany.' Hanfstaengl retorted that he had always thought the Führer's style had done that.¹¹ Hitler, put up to it by Goebbels, despatched

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Hanfstaengl on a fake 'parachute mission behind the lines to General Franco' in February 1937: Terrified for his life, Hanfstaengl absconded to London.¹² ?

It was here at this round table that Hitler and Goebbels plotted the special edition of a counterfeit *Völkischer Beobachter* in which their self-important radio chief Eugen Hadamowsky could learn that he had been awarded the Goethe Prize (he had not). They ushered him out onto the balcony to take the plaudits of the Wilhelm Strasse crowds; once out there, he found the street bare.¹³

The two Nazis had each other's measure. Goebbels joked once that President Roosevelt had written inviting him to become propaganda secretary in Washington. 'A tough choice, dear Doctor,' replied Hitler smoothly. 'Let me know how you decide.'¹⁴ Hitler would recall the election meeting at Stettin where Goebbels, replacing him at short notice, found the ticket price slashed from 60 to 25 pfennigs. 'Remember now,' he would chide Goebbels. 'You're not worth half as much as I.'¹⁵

Goebbels needed public adulation as a vampire feeds on blood.¹⁶ The British government decided in June 1937 that he was out of favor, and losing influence in the country.¹⁷ Like many small men he was sensitive to criticism, and swooned with rage at foreign caricatures that highlighted his physical deformity. He had a youth who called him a Jesuit catspaw sentenced to three months.¹⁸ The mayor of Halle earned low marks for recommending in an article that promotions depend on physique. Yet the women around Hitler adored him. Hitler's junior secretaries would rush to the windows whenever Goebbels walked by. 'If you only knew what eyes he has,' they enthused to a new colleague, 'and how captivately he laughs.'¹⁹ Hitler would also mention that laugh, telling Streicher after Goebbels had spent a week at the Berghof, 'Anybody who can laugh as loudly as this man, whom Nature has so cruelly afflicted, cannot be all bad.'²⁰ Streicher told him that Hitler had said he could not get along without Goebbels.²¹ The other top Nazis were less easily captivated. Darré wrote of the minister as a 'mongrel apeman.'²² At one training course at Vogelsang, the Nazi staff college, the eight hundred district leaders (Kreisleiter) greeted both Goebbels' appearance and his speech with total silence. One participant saw beads of perspiration trickle down his face before he furiously stalked off the stage.²³

His own self-image was of a family man and Hitler's most universally popular minister.²⁴ Once that summer he decided that in future he would walk to the ministry. Two adjutants ferched him from the villa in Hermann-Göring Strasse the next morning. None of the thousands of passers-by took any notice, and he never did it again. He preferred staged photo-opportunities, like the annual first day of the Winter Relief collection, when he would face the photographers with his wife and children, all holding collecting boxes. 'What good fortune,' he marveled, 'to be so loved by one's people.'²⁵

His postbag might contain a poem couched in *Plattdeutsch* praising the new four year plan; or a letter beginning engagingly, 'As a fanatical female

April 1, 1937

Nazi I make so bold as to —²⁶ His fortieth birthday would bring an avalanche of telegrams ("Those from the people," he confided to his diary, "are the most touching").²⁷ The party's illustrated newspaper featured 'Our Doctor, as Berlin's gauleiter is called by his Berliners,' at home, with Helmut and his pony, and Helga with the toy sewing machine given her by Hitler.²⁸ Goebbels released a short film to the cinemas, *Pappi's Birthday*, featuring himself arriving in yet another brand new car, a Maybach, at his country estate, where feudal retainers bowed to him, and liveried grooms tended to the children's ponies. Some liked it: One moviegoer penned these lines to Magda: 'How proudly in the cinema / I saw maternity thus blest. / I cast my mind toward the home / where I have built my nest.'²⁹ Berlin's starving working class however hooted at the screen and Hitler ordered the film withdrawn immediately.³⁰

IGNORING Hitler's call for peace on the church front, Dr Goebbels began a vitriolic campaign against the two main churches that lasted from March until the end of 1937. It began when the Pope issued a pastoral letter critical of Germany on March 21. Goebbels at first persuaded Heydrich not to notify Hitler, arguing that they should merely confiscate the church printing presses which had disseminated it.³¹ As a further response, on April 1—according to Goebbels—Hitler telephoned the authorization to him to stage a series of show trials against the catholic clergy. The Nazi prosecutors had a back-file of several hundred untried sex cases against catholic priests. The catholics, decided Goebbels, had not properly appreciated the Nazis' patience and moderation. 'Now let them find out how merciless we can be.'³² He sent Berndt to cover a particularly sleazy case in Belgium, the sex murder of a youngster in a monastery, and persuaded the Reich justice ministry to open the first sex trials at Koblenz.³³ He ordered sound recordings made, keeping Hitler closely informed at each stage—or so his diary claimed.³⁴

Goebbels honed the stage-management of these political trials to a fine art. The first, of Franciscan monks charged with sexual perversions, began in Koblenz late in April.³⁵ He followed the propaganda coverage closely. One priest implicated the bishop of Trier himself. 'That's a real bombshell,' chortled Goebbels, savoring his revenge. 'I've had it all recorded on discs, in case.'³⁶ He furnished regular summaries of the sordid details to Hitler, who swore to 'smoke out' this 'gang of pederasts.'³⁷ From catholic Austria, Ambassador von Papen pleaded with Goebbels to tone down the campaign, fearing an outright ban on German newspapers there. At first the catholic hierarchy maintained a dignified silence.³⁸ Goebbels hatched further schemes to destroy them—the sequestration of the church's assets, and laws to end priestly celibacy and to prevent anybody younger than twenty-four studying theology ('Thus we'll deprive them of their finest raw material'). Hitler however urged caution.³⁹

Just as the Nazi campaign was flagging, Cardinal George Mundelein, archbishop of Chicago, publicly denounced Hitler over the Koblenz

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trials. Goebbels, retaliating, began the first trials of protestant clergymen on homosexuality charges too. He inaugurated this new campaign in his biggest speech that spring, from the new Deutschland Halle in Berlin on May 28, 1937.⁴⁰ The state, he declared, was responsible for providing the people with bread, raw materials, currency, cannon, and airplanes; the churches had merely to secure Eternal Happiness—surely, he asked to loud guffaws, that task was big enough for them? He argued that the Nazis had set an example in June 1934: 'over sixty people who tried to cultivate this vice [homosexuality] in the party were shot out of hand; on top of this, the party frankly reported to the nation upon this episode.' The bishops had however become accessories, by shielding those guilty of such practices.⁴¹

Not hesitating to interfere with the legal system, Goebbels dictated stage directions to the public prosecutor at Koblenz, Paul Windhausen, who had the rank of Brigadeführer in the S.A.⁴² (To western eyes it seems offensive, but in Germany throughout the twentieth century prosecutors and judges have always been the capstans of the government in office.) Case files piled up on his desk as he compiled dossiers with all the revolting details.⁴³ Up and down the country that summer the angry priests bravely struck back from their pulpits. Police arrested two of Goebbels' most prominent scourges, Pastor Martin Niemöller and Otto Dibelius.⁴⁴ Dibelius was acquitted—Goebbels called it a slap in the face of the state and got straight on the phone to Hitler. Hitler however ordered all such trials halted for the time being.⁴⁵ Fearing that his Führer was getting cold feet, Goebbels sent Hanke to the Berghof with the most loathsome dossiers, but in vain.⁴⁶ Several times he reverted to the matter, in December 1937 and again in January. But on each occasion Hitler responded that he wanted peace restored on the church front: It was not a battleground of his own choosing.⁴⁷

Without doubt this anti-church campaign damaged Goebbels' reputation both at home and abroad. An open letter, four pages of articulate, closely typed criticism, circulated in Bavaria. It expressed alarm that the *propaganda* minister was seemingly able to dictate which cases to prosecute and when. Referring to Goebbels' speech to a 'well-briefed party mob' at the Deutschland Halle, the pamphlet scoffed that, far from acting swiftly to shoot its leaders for homosexuality, the Nazis had turned a blind eye on them until Röhm and his consorts had got out of hand. The people were sick of the extravagances of the leaders of the so-called Workers' party, the letter continued, what with their country mansions, limousines, and yachts. All of this touched very raw nerves indeed. Goebbels had the authors, a church worker and a lawyer, arrested.⁴⁸

Corrupted by power he was becoming more autocratic, even dictatorial. He arbitrarily forbade his adjutant to touch alcohol for six months. He punished radio station directors for going on a binge. He ordered a careless bus driver arrested.⁴⁹ He took a sterner line at home too—putting little Helga across his knee when she began to fib; and when two-year-old Helmut answered him back, Goebbels paddled the lad too,

March, 1937

228 III: THE REICH MINISTER

though reluctantly. 'He doesn't give in,' he noted indulgently. 'Not a bad sign!'⁵⁰

His diary is innocent of any consciousness of his own double standards. He expressed horror at Stalin's show trials, although Hitler had not offered his victims even this formality before shooting them in June 1934. He fiercely protected his own Staatssekretär, the podgy Walter Funk, even while prosecuting the clergy. When Hitler forbade further police prying into Funk's sexual perversions, Goebbels breathed into his diary: 'Thank goodness.'⁵¹ Lustful in private, he was starkly puritan in public. 'They can have a thousand nude women if they want,' he pontificated. 'But without those nasty, smutty jokes.' He sent for Trude Hesterberg, one of the Scala's lovelier singers, and lectured her on the indecency of her act. After visiting the Scala, a burlesque theater, he threatened to have it aryanized or even shut down altogether.⁵² But he disclaimed any aspirations to act as a chastity-overlord: When Heiner Kurzbein, the (unfortunately named) chief of his ministry's photographic section, suggested they censor some of the more risqué photos of the 1938 film ball, Goebbels would overrule him: 'A dollop of healthy eroticism is not out of place,' he declared, 'and far better normal than abnormal.'⁵³

The aryanization of the sub-chambers of the chamber of culture, particularly the chamber of music, would plod on far into 1939.⁵⁴ Furtwängler kept butting in, interceding for individual Jews.⁵⁵ At his speech to the chamber of culture on November 26, 1937 Goebbels would boast that he had completely eliminated the Jew from the artistic life of Germany: 'Imagine my surprise,' wrote Louis Lochner privately, 'when the next day *Musical American* arrives and I read that with the approval of the German Government no other person than Yehudi Menuhin . . . a Jew, has obtained the right to produce the [newly rediscovered] Schumann [violin] concerto in the USA!'⁵⁶ Elsewhere Goebbels enacted police ordinances to exclude the Jews from stage, screen, and concert performances; he also clamped down harder on their publishing houses and bookstores.⁵⁷ When Jews in the United States protested, led by Mayor Fiorello La Guardia of New York, Goebbels banned Jewish and Zionist communal activities in Germany for two months.⁵⁸ After Nazi hooligans smashed the windows of Jewish stores in Danzig, the international clamor resumed.⁵⁹ Goebbels aryanized Germany's remaining Jewish-owned theaters and turfed the last Jews out of Germany's recording industry.⁶⁰ To break the Jewish near-monopoly on overseas film distribution, he arranged with Alfred Hess, Rudolf's brother, to use the party's Foreign Organization, the AO, instead.⁶¹

In March 1937, using precisely the methods that he had previously branded as Jewish, Goebbels took over the major Ufa film company for the Reich. As a warning to Ufa he had instructed the press to trash its latest production; the film flopped disastrously, and the company agreed to sell out.⁶² 'Today we buy up Ufa,' recorded Goebbels, 'and thus we [the propaganda ministry] are the biggest film, press, theater, and radio

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March, 1937

concern in the world.⁶³ Dismissing the entire Ufa board, he began to intervene in film production at every level, dismissing directors, recommending actresses (like the fiery Spaniard, Imperio Argentina), forcing through innovations like color cinematography, and rationalizing screen-test facilities for all three major studios, Ufa, Tobis, and Bavaria.⁶⁴ Depriving the distributors of any say in such matters he created instead artistic boards to steer future film production. Suddenly the film industry began to surge ahead. Blockbuster films swept the box offices. With a sure touch, Goebbels stopped the production of pure propaganda and party epics, opting for more subtle messages instead—the wholesome family, the life well spent.

Until then the status of the acting profession had been lowly. He changed all that. He converted the old Rathenau villa on Skagerrak Platz into an Artistes' Club. Its lush furnishings, its dimly lit cocktail bar, and its dance floor made it a popular haunt for raffishly dressed actors, actresses with plunging necklines, and strutting officials of the Nazi party. Both Magda and Dr Goebbels often went there—though seldom in each other's company.

ALTHOUGH he strives to conceal it from his diary, Joseph Goebbels' infatuation with the ravishingly beautiful Lida Baarova has grown more hopeless. The 1937 diary mentions her name without special emphasis, but he carelessly spills enough clues around for the researcher to grasp what is happening. 'Strolled in the park and talked with Magda,' he writes dutifully. 'She is so nice and adorable. I have taken her into my heart.' Then, 'I drive on out to Bogensee'—the lake at Lanke on which he now has his isolated little wooden house.⁶⁵ It is out here, in the depths of the forest, that somebody is usually waiting for him. These are, it may be recalled, the very days when Hitler's Cabinet is solemnly discussing fierce new laws on divorce and adultery. 'Out to Bogensee in the afternoon,' he writes the next day, having again left Magda in Berlin. 'Some music, reading, and writing.' That month he takes a special interest in Lida's latest film, the spy-thriller *Patriots*, being made for Ufa. He reviews the screen-tests, discusses the story line with director Karl Ritter ('It must get a nationalist slant'), and reworks the filmplay himself; on January 25, he goes out to Babelsberg to watch shooting begin.⁶⁶ Viewing the first takes, he finds Lida's acting wonderful. 'The farewell and final scene are deeply touching,' he writes.⁶⁷ He becomes addicted to re-runs of her earlier movies. After watching her and Gustav Fröhlich in *Barcarole* on February 23—after seeing the very scene she had been performing when he and Hitler first set eyes on her at the studios—he tells the diary, 'La Ba[a]rova's acting is wonderful, moving, and heart-breaking.' (Fröhlich however is 'a little twirp who can't act').⁶⁸

A few days earlier all three have been involved in a silly incident outside Fröhlich's villa on Schwanenwerder. With Magda in the maternity clinic since February 2, Goebbels is often lonely in the evenings. Twice that month he drives out to his own empty villa on the peninsula (the house

at Lanke is being ventilated).⁶⁹ Early on one of these evenings Lida arrives at Gustav's villa; later, hearing a limousine, she steps out into the snow to greet her lover but finds Goebbels inside instead with his chauffeur Alfred Rach at the wheel.

'Hello!' exclaims the minister. 'What brings you out in the middle of the night?'

She puts one foot on the running board and explains, 'I'm waiting for Gustl. He's got a première.'

Even as they exchange these brief pleasantries, Fröhlich himself drives up. He leaps out, white with rage, and grabs Lida's arm, perhaps even slapping her. 'Well, Herr Minister,' he snaps, assuming that she has just stepped out of the limousine. 'Now we know where we stand!'

Goebbels acts astonished. 'What was that about?' he asks Lida.

The actress stammers apologies for her lover. When Fröhlich lets himself into his villa, he finds Lida's handbag already there and realizes his mistake.⁷⁰ Fröhlich phones an abject apology to Goebbels. The minister records only one further meeting with him, in May 1937—ostensibly they chat about casting and taxation problems, and they trade society gossip. 'Frö[h]lich,' he mocks in his diary, 'is of consummate stupidity.'⁷¹ A few weeks later he makes a note to look for a good man to play opposite Lida.⁷²

Soliciting Lida more persistently, Goebbels often phones her at home. She has no objections. Once, he hears her doorbell ring and the phone being snatched from her; then Fröhlich screaming into the mouthpiece, 'Who is that?' The minister can hear the betrayed lover raging at her, 'It's Goebbels, isn't it? I knew it! How long has this been going on? We're through! Our love is dead—we are standing at its graveside.' Up to this point, in fact, no intimacies have passed between her and the minister.⁷³ She moves out, renting a fine villa, No. 14 Taubert Strasse, in the Grunewald. Initially he keeps his interest in her a close secret. Hoping to see her privately, he once directs her to prepare dinner for ten at her Grunewald home, and to join him seemingly unexpectedly that evening in a box at the Scala where she is to invite him and his entourage back home for dinner. Play acting, Goebbels looks completely surprised. 'Gentlemen,' he says, 'shall we accept?' All do so with alacrity, except for Hanke, who comes along in bad grace. Goebbels never visits her Grunewald villa alone.⁷⁴

Lida Baarova moves out of Fröhlich's life, and Goebbels gives her the key to the barrier on the back road to the Lanke villa. Emotionally she becomes his slave—and he hers. They spend days together at Lanke, with him playing the piano, and her dozing on a sofa or reading. Their relationship is almost platonic. For a year sex hardly comes into it—and then only for weeks rather than months. She does not even notice that he wears a leg-brace. They sleep in different rooms—Kaiser tiptoes in each morning at five A.M. to wake her, as they both have early starts back to Berlin.⁷⁵ If Goebbels cannot get away from the ministry, he commands her to be at the other end of an open phone line: From time to time he

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picks up the earpiece just to hear her breathing. Sometimes she drives into Voss Strasse and walks past, for him to adore her from his window across the street.⁷⁶ Once, out at Lanke, he commands her to show him how she will recognize him if things go wrong and they meet only in Heaven; she walks a few yards, turns round, and, a consummate actress, plays the little cameo role to perfection.⁷⁷

Throughout 1937 the affair warms up, while he consequently neglects Magda. The doctors have warned him after Holde's birth that his wife must not get pregnant for two more years. 'I'll see to that,' promises Goebbels, and whiles away the afternoon with a film actress with professional problems ('I believe I can help her').⁷⁸ Two or three days later he helps another actress to the best of his ability, noting afterwards. 'She's a good sort.'⁷⁹ Having meanwhile met the young sculptress Barbara von Kalckreuth in a train, he sits for her in his snow-decked villa at Lanke and she gets twenty more diary entries over the next three years.⁸⁰ He sits for famous sculptor Arno Breker too; Breker rates only three mentions over the same period, one of them a terse: 'Never again.'⁸¹

On visits to Magda at the clinic her jealous tirades drive their relationship almost to destruction.⁸² His diary celebrates her homecoming on March 23 most touchingly. 'She is my One and All. When she's not there, house and home lie empty and desolate.'⁸³ With Magda home again, he fills Schwanenwerder with friends from the film industry like the Veit Harlans, the Willy Birgels, the Höpfner sisters, and Lida Baarova. 'Magda is again the most beautiful of all,' he writes, helplessly caught between the two women. 'Women are a plague on us all,' he reflects in April.⁸⁴ In July he discusses his wife's indifferent health with Ilse Hess, who writes to Magda: 'Your husband told me that he's worried about you, and that you ought to have a pause to recuperate before getting down to the next five offspring you've promised the Führer and the Third Reich.'⁸⁵

Caring little for the needs of his own Berliners, but at their expense, he sequesters still more of the forest terrain surrounding his villa at Lanke. Labour Service gangs clear paths and erect boardwalks through 'my forest,' as he brazenly terms it, and begin laying down a private beach with a little jetty.⁸⁶ Officials import swans and wild duck to the lake.⁸⁷ On Hanke's advice he commissions Hitler's young architect Albert Speer to redesign his official residence in Hermann-Göring Strasse.⁸⁸ As he watches the newly imported reindeer stealing across his lawn at Lanke, he is becoming more detached than ever from the ordinary Berliners to whom he owes so much, yet Hitler still does nothing against this blatant corruption.

Goebbels proudly shows him the new Baarova film *Patriots* and hastens out to Lanke afterward to tell her that it has delighted him. Twice that May Hitler comes over to Schwanenwerder to cruise aboard the Goebbels yacht, surrounded by the latest handsome women in the minister's life. And once, as they again cruise alone among the blossoms of Potsdam, Hitler unburdens himself to Goebbels about his secret, innermost

ambition—to undo for ever the humiliation done to Germany by the Peace of Westphalia which had concluded the Thirty Years' War in 1648 greatly to her disadvantage.⁸⁹

ENCOURAGED by these confidences, Goebbels publicly stated his views on foreign affairs. Speaking in Berlin on February 12, 1937 of the new Czech alliance with Moscow he warned, 'Let the world take note that Germany is a great power.' London bridled.⁹⁰ He got on well with the new British ambassador, Sir Neville Henderson, and both men hoped that if Britain's new prime minister Neville Chamberlain could only refrain in the Jewish press clamor there was a real chance of rapprochement, despite all the gaucheries that the new Nazi ambassador Ribbentrop was committing in London.⁹¹

Hitler had no firm plan of action mapped out as yet. Like Goebbels he believed in the Goddess of Good Fortune—in seizing opportunities as they arose.⁹² Goebbels had however begun preparing his ministry for war: At Hitler's instigation he had started to build a cable radio system (*Drahtfunk*) which would free transmitter capacity for a propaganda war while rendering the German listening public impervious to enemy radio propaganda.⁹³ He issued contracts for five powerful one-megawatt transmitters.⁹⁴

By this time, though without perceptible immediate cause, he had become concerned about his own safety. He underwent pistol training,⁹⁵ and in December 1937 he called off at the last minute a private trip to Egypt which he had been planning for three months—one phone call from Rudolf Hess, warning of possible risks, sufficed. 'On occasions,' reported the British embassy, 'he has shown a certain nervousness about his own skin.'⁹⁶

Political events in Central Europe were slowly building up their own head of steam. At the end of July 1937 Goebbels staged a spectacular choral festival at Breslau. Among the thirty thousand Germans from overseas was a large contingent from Austria. The Austrians chanted Goebbels' latest slogan, 'Ein Reich—ein Volk!' There were emotional scenes in the main square as the massed choirs marched past. Newsreel cameras whirled. The spectacle remained engraved on the memory of every member of Hitler's staff. 'For a quarter of an hour the procession halts,' wrote Goebbels, 'the people just standing still, singing, laughing, weeping.' Everybody knew what Hitler was thinking at that moment, he said later. When—it was now no longer a question of if—they went marching into Austria, hardly a shot would be fired. He showed Hitler the newsreels two days later, but Hitler ordered him not to release them to avoid reprisals against Austrians seen cheering.⁹⁷

On the day after Breslau, Hitler visited Schwanenwerder—Goebbels' sister was celebrating her engagement—and again took him into his confidence. He planned to make a 'clean sweep' in Austria. 'Let's hope we all live to see that day,' wrote Goebbels. He day-dreamed about the Führer's triumphal entry into Vienna. After that, he mused, it would be

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Czechoslovakia's turn.⁹⁸ At the Nuremberg rally in September the Austrian contingent again staged an emotional scene. Here Hitler assured Goebbels: 'Austria will be dealt with one day by force.'⁹⁹

DR GOEBBELS does these things well,' remarked one British official dryly, after reading his fifty-page speech at Nuremberg, yet another attack on bolshevism and the Jews.¹⁰⁰ In Russia, said Goebbels, Stalin had murdered forty-two thousand priests; in Spain, his agents had already killed seventeen thousand priests and monks by February; yet the world resounded with squawks of horror if one Jew in Germany had his ears deservedly boxed. The Jew, he said, was a parasite, 'the destroyer of culture ... the ferment of decomposition.' Hitler's line again varied only marginally from Goebbels'. The Führer had nominated Professor Ernst Sauerbruch as joint winner of the new National Prize, despite objections from Goebbels that the surgeon was a 'vassal of the Jews.' To circumvent criticism Goebbels now asked the surgeon at least to join the party. Sauerbruch politely declined.¹⁰¹

Opinion was divided about Goebbels' relationship with Hitler. Which was the evil genius, and which the spellbound princeling? George Ward Price, the perceptive *Daily Mail* journalist, was emphatic that Goebbels was more dangerous even than Himmler, because he committed Hitler to courses of action by presenting him with *faits accomplis*.¹⁰² (The presidential election, the trials of the priests, the later pogroms against the Jews, and total war are all supporting examples.) Only rarely did Hitler actually apply the brake: In November for instance he phoned Goebbels to back off on their colonial demands.¹⁰³ When Goebbels initiated a raucous campaign against the Czech government, alleging maltreatment of their German ethnic minority, first the Sudeten German leader Konrad Henlein and then Hitler asked him to slow down.¹⁰⁴ Over lunch at the chancellery the Führer reminded him that Germany could not do anything about it yet 'The Czechs,' sulked Goebbels, 'are crazy. They are surrounded by a hundred million enemies whose land and people they have usurped. *Na, prost!*' he exclaimed, ironically toasting them. Before lunch ended Hitler had again told him to downplay both the colonial and the church problems. 'We must keep our propaganda powder dry,' agreed Goebbels.¹⁰⁵

THAT afternoon however, in Goebbels' absence, Hitler called a secret Cabinet-level meeting at which he revealed to his foreign minister and his commanders-in-chief his intention to launch a war of territorial conquest, beginning with a 'lightning attack' on Czechoslovakia during 1938.¹⁰⁶

Winning over Britain in the meanwhile, without offending Mussolini, would be a challenge.¹⁰⁷ Here Goebbels was a greater hindrance than Ribbentrop. Although Ambassador Henderson respected Goebbels, his principal officials believed that the minister was trying to whip up anti-British sentiment.¹⁰⁸ This was not true. While mocking the hypocrisy of

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the English, he echoed Hitler's regrets that they were losing their empire. He blamed this on the foolish statesmanship of Eden (now British foreign secretary), and compared him unfavorably with Lord Halifax, the Lord Privy Seal, who was visiting Germany for Göring's international hunting exhibition.¹⁰⁹

Goebbels took tea with this aristocratic English statesman, this 'very calm, collected, and clever' Cabinet minister, and pleaded with him to rein in Britain's unruly, sensation-hungry editors.¹¹⁰ He drew attention to his own newspapers' restraint during the British abdication crisis. 'I had expected to dislike him [Goebbels] intensely,' confessed Halifax in his own private diary, '—but didn't. I suppose it must be some moral defect in me, but the fact remains.'¹¹¹

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* Transcribed Milan, this previously published as *Der* London, 1995.