

1944

Hitler - The man & military leader - Detweiler
The Ailing Empire - Haffner

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AT in 1944

The Life of the Bee

day beholds the birth of thousands of bees. The overgrown males now all sally forth from their cells, and disport themselves on the combs; and so crowded does the too prosperous city become that hundreds of belated workers, coming back from the flowers towards evening, will vainly seek shelter within, and will be forced to spend the night on the threshold, where they will be decimated by the cold.

Restlessness seizes the people, and the old queen begins to stir. She feels that a new destiny is being prepared. She has religiously fulfilled her duty as a good creatress; and from this duty done there result only tribulation and sorrow. An invincible power menaces her tranquillity; she will soon be forced to quit this city of hers, where she has reigned. But this city is her work, it is she, herself. She is not its queen in the sense in which men use the word. She issues no

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Neighbour
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* also - The bees grow
with the flowers.

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The Swarm

orders; she obeys, as meekly as the humblest of her subjects, the masked power, sovereignly wise, that for the present, and till we attempt to locate it, we will term the "spirit of the hive." But she is the unique organ of love; she

it amid uncertainty and poverty. She has peopled it with her own substance; and all who move within its walls — workers, males, larvæ, nymphs, and the young princesses whose approaching birth will hasten her own departure, one of them being already designed as her successor by the "spirit of the hive" — all these have issued from her flanks.

Adi
Henderson
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Klara

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What is this "spirit of the hive" — where does it reside? It is not like the special instinct that teaches the bird to construct its well planned nest, and then

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boy was called Edmund. A week later Alois Hitler, who had evidently satisfied his superiors, was appointed to an even higher post in Linz. Because Edmund was too young to travel, Klara and the children remained for another year in Passau.

In this way Adolf came to enjoy another year of paradise, for he was permitted to do whatever he wanted by his indulgent mother, and there was no father to warn and chastise him. He says nothing about the years spent in Passau in *Mein Kampf*, but one does not write about childhood in a book devoted to revolutionary struggle and invective. Nevertheless it was here that he encountered Gothic and Baroque architecture in their fullness, and saw the Renaissance flowering around him. During the last year at Passau, when his father was absent in Linz and Alois and Angela were on no school, he had his mother to himself, for Edmund was too young to challenge his hold on her affections.

Adolf was a mother's boy, a *Muttersöhnchen*, one of those who are incurably devoted to their mothers and therefore capable of latent and sometimes open hostility to the father. He was perfectly aware of it and seems to have thought it was a natural state of affairs, not to be questioned. For his father he possessed a respect amounting to awe, because he was so old and so powerfully built, because he was so obviously an authoritarian figure whose instant commands must be obeyed. To the very end of his life, when he was living in a subterranean bunker in the heart of burning Berlin, he kept his mother's photograph with him and found himself continually gazing at it. He did not keep a photograph of his father, and on the rare occasions when he spoke about his father, it was usually with suppressed fury.

Already the seeds of many future disasters were being sown. By being so devoted to his mother, Adolf was ensuring that he would find no woman equal to her, for she alone represented the ideal. All women would be compared with Klara, and most of them would be found wanting. From his father he inherited the authoritarian temper, the stern dogmatic approach to all problems, and a sense of purpose.

Early in 1895 Alois Hitler made one of the most important decisions in his life. He decided to retire from the customs service and bought property in the village of Hafeld, some thirty miles southwest of Linz. It was a small village with about two dozen houses and about a hundred inhabitants, and there was a fine view of the Salzkammergut mountains. The village was on a high ridge, and there were orchards and nut trees in abundance.

There were serpents in this paradise, but the first impression was one of serene beauty. Later, when the autumn rains came and the sharp winds blew from the mountains, Alois Hitler would have second

* with Geli, he remembers the position in which he saw Alois + Klara.

* He says the most beautiful woman in the world?

(B) when his father is not present his sense of relief is Katefieri re: the architecture

Passau
Architecture

(A)

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begin to lay building in Linz of Klara

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(1944)

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The Early Years

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I-5 (5) * Give you the most beautiful woman in the world? <

* When his father is not present his sense of relief is palpable re: the authoritarian

The Nuptial Flight

In the meanwhile they exhaust the supplies of the city; each one of the parasites requiring the unceasing labour of five or six workers to maintain it in its abounding and voracious idleness, its activity being indeed solely confined to its jaws. But nature is always magnificent when dealing with the privileges and prerogatives of love. She becomes miserly only when doling out the organs and instruments of labour. She is especially severe on what men have termed virtue, whereas she strews the path of the most uninteresting lovers with innumerable jewels and favours. "Unite and multiply; there is no other law, or aim, than love," would seem to be her constant cry on all sides, while she mutters to herself, perhaps: "and exist afterwards if you can; that is no concern of mine." Do or desire what else we may, we find, everywhere on our road, this morality

(944)

144

The Life of the Bee

unique kiss of an instant that shall wed him to death no less than to happiness; while the others will fly helplessly round the intertwined pair, and soon will perish without ever again beholding this prodigious and fatal apparition.

[83]

I am not exaggerating this wild and amazing prodigality of nature. The best-conducted hives will, as a rule, contain four to five hundred males. Weaker or degenerate ones will often have as many as four or five thousand; for the more a hive inclines to its ruin, the more males will it produce. It may be said that, on an average, an apiary composed of ten colonies will at a given moment send an army of ten thousand males into the air, of whom ten or fifteen at most will have the occasion of performing the one act for which they were born.

298

A. H. 1944

thinking of ~~the~~ *delirious* officers.

1944

2 Copies DP

promoting the common good, quietly, efficiently, and resolutely.

An existing colony can get a new queen by two primary means: supersedure and requeening. They are, in effect, the same, in that a new queen is introduced. In requeening, the beekeeper provides a new queen, one he has raised himself or, more likely, one bought from an apiary in the south. In supersedure the bees produce their own queen. Most beekeepers prefer to provide a queen of their choice before the bees can take over to assure greater quality control. Often there is a conflict between what the bees and their keepers desire: man usually seeks uniformity in the same way that nature prefers diversity.

1944-45

It is understandable that most queens use up their supply of sperm within a year or two. Every twenty-four hours a queen lays eggs equal to her own weight. When her sperm is largely spent, she starts laying at a reduced rate; when it is completely exhausted she can lay nothing but unfertilized drone eggs or none at all.

Bees almost never supersede a queen if she is producing brood satisfactorily, but the prevailing wisdom among beekeepers is that queens should be replaced routinely every year, two at most, before they fail. Commercial operations rarely keep a queen more than one year. Requeening usually means killing the old queen, an unpleasant business that I flinch from, preferring to let the bees work it out among themselves. To the old queen who must be replaced, I suppose, it makes little difference whether she is dispatched by her own from within, or by the beekeeper from without. In either case the queen must die.

The best queens come from eggs only a few hours old, the fresher the better. The bees may select a newly laid egg and build a queen cell around it, or move it to a waiting royal crib.

HBF Both methods require preparation and planning, so supersedure cannot be an impetuous act, but represents a sober judgment by the colony's ruling councils. Supersedure cells, unlike

swarm cells, are usually found high up on the frames of honey-comb, near the center of the hive, probably so the young princesses can be protected from the old queen's jealousy and wrath.

Supersedure cells are about three times the size of worker cells and double that of drone cells, sticking out from the comb they're attached to like the nose of a bullet, with a corrugated peanut-like texture. Once supersedure cells appear, the old queen's days are numbered, but business in the hive goes on as usual, the failing queen laying as best she can. It would be rash on the part of the colony to dispatch her before a successor is ready to take her place. Treachery has its own logic.

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THIRTY-NINE



Supersedure must, of necessity, be a surreptitious undertaking. Otherwise it probably couldn't come off. Why would the queen, dim-witted as she is, cooperate in providing her own successor? And yet, to confound us a bit more, queens have been seen actually depositing eggs in supersedure cells. But this is so rare that we are left wondering whether it is an absent-minded act, unnoticed by the queen in laying thousands of eggs, a breakdown of instinct, senility, a flaw in her programming, or done under duress.

The fact that any fertile egg is a potential queen suggests a perfect biological democracy within the hive, each egg being the equal of all others, assuming that an egg selected to become a queen is chosen at random. But that may be a romantic notion with no basis in fact, and bees have an elitist or selective criterion unknown to us. Certainly they have the highest standards for their young. Any worker or drone born with the slightest imperfection is destroyed at once. However, in their

authanasia (1939?)

ber of the colony, size being equated with power, and it probably says more about those who made the error than it does about the bees.

The ancients, not understanding the queen's role, had some odd notions about bees and their origins. The *ABC and XYZ of Bee Culture*, an invaluable reference book published by the A. I. Root Company, and known as "the Bible of Beekeepers," states that it was not until 1609 that an English beekeeper named Butler affirmed that the "Kingbee" was really a queen, because he had seen her deposit eggs.

Before that, the ancient Greeks believed that bees came from dead oxen and could be raised by killing an ox and leaving it in a sealed room for thirty-two days; the belief persisted for hundreds of years, and directions for producing bees in this way were published as late as 1842, the last time they appeared.

The *ABC and XYZ of Bee Culture* states that Virgil wrote that bees collected their embryos from leaves and sweet plants. The Greek historian Xenophon compared the work of the queen with that of a housewife and considered her the guiding brain of the hive. The Dutchman Swammerdam thought that queens were fertilized by a seminal exhalation of "odoriferous effluvia" produced from a large number of drones. The Roman scholar Varo thought that diarrhea in bees could be cured by giving them urine to drink and that bees gathered wax from flowers. Pliny the Elder wrote that echoes kill bees. It was widely believed that the sound of clashing symbols causes bees to swarm, a long-disproven idea that still persists.

Aristotle was the first to study bees scientifically. He was the first to drop the notion that bees come from dead oxen, and gradually scholars better understood the nature of bees and the queen's true role in the hive.

The queen is more servant to the hive than sovereign with little, if any, control over her life or destiny, living at the convenience and tolerance of the colony. She cannot perform the simplest survival tasks for herself, even depending on her work-

daughters to make possible the conditions that enable her to lay eggs. Because she will not sting any bee except another queen, she is virtually defenseless against those who control her with their hive machinations and the threat of their lethal prison or death chamber.

If the queen were smarter, she would probably be hopelessly neurotic. As is, she is shy and skittish, possibly because she never leaves the hive but spends her days confined in darkness, a kind of eternal night, perpetually in labor, experiencing no life other than that which she generates in her own body. When the hive is opened, suddenly dissolving the darkness with blinding sunlight, she is likely to take to her heels, hiding in far corners and making it difficult to find or identify her, risking death or injury as the frames are manipulated.

Her position in the hive is ambiguous at best. Despite her own dependency and perilous position, the colony is dependent upon her for its existence. She is indispensable and yet subject to being killed in panic or by whim, or replaced in what amounts to star chamber proceedings against her. Any figurative crown she wears must rest uneasily on her head. Her true role is less that of queen than mother of the hive, a title often accorded her. And yet, this is something of a mockery because of her lack of maternal instincts or the ability to care for her young. She is, more than anything else, an automated egg-laying machine, a derogatory but descriptive name she must bear.

In appearance, she is a striking insect, larger than her daughters, more slender and longer; if of Italian extraction, she has a tawny, golden hue with the characteristic black bands of her race. She has a regal air and is properly named queen for that alone. With exquisitely tapered wings folded back over her elongated body, she is the picture of insect grace as she glides from cell to cell depositing eggs in mindless dedication to her life's work.

Nature, always expeditious in matters of reproduction, has

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instinct and inability to care for her young; worker and queen complement one another, each lost without the other.

Beekkeepers long puzzled over how an ordinary worker bee, with her undeveloped reproductive organs, could suddenly start laying eggs. The accepted theory was that such females were probably raised in cribs near queen cells, exposing them to more royal jelly than regular brood, thus giving them a limited egg-laying ability. Now the cause is known to be more complex.

The answer is believed to lie in pheromones, those extraordinary chemical signals produced by certain glands and transmitted from bee to bee by direct bodily contact, in food, or even through the air. These signals probably affect almost every hive function, including clustering, danger alerts, attacking enemies, marking trails, comb building, the mating flight, and, perhaps most important of all, inhibiting egg laying in worker bees.

This may be the queen's real power, her only true hive clout. She produces a glandular secretion known as "queen substance" from glands in her head; the way it regulates order in the hive by keeping all her chaste daughters' ovaries inhibited may well be one of nature's more extraordinary inventions.

FIFTY-FOUR



1944 How queen substance acts to prevent egg laying in worker bees is not known, but it appears to be closely related to a queen's fertility. As long as she is capable of laying fertilized eggs, she appears able to manufacture the secretion. But once her supply of stored sperm is exhausted, or she begins to fail, she seems to lose her ability to produce the substance.

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How the queen produces the pheromone is unclear. But every member of the colony is exposed to it. The attendants get it by licking the queen's body, and they, in turn, pass it along to others. If deprived of the secretion, the bees know at once that their queen is failing, if not already over the hill. If there are new fertile eggs in the nest, they will immediately begin building supersedure queen cells.

This suggests that queen substance works like a kind of biological thermostat, automatically triggering certain responses by its presence or absence. While little is known about queen substance, it is believed not only to protect the queen from rivalry by her daughters who might presume to lay eggs themselves, but to act as a sex attractant during the mating flight.

The discovery that queen substance induces bees to supersede a failing queen resolves one mystery of the hive, but creates others: What is this incredible secretion and how is it produced? How does it affect worker bees and what are their receptors? Is the effect psychological, physiological, or both? What other hive functions or behavior might it also influence?

How many other secretions, or signals, do bees generate that also regulate or determine hive functions? We recognize that worker bees produce pheromones that enable them to communicate with one another, but how many others not yet identified may have equally profound effects? Research in the field of insect communication has barely been touched upon. We are still shaken by the realization that plants apparently can communicate with one another and even have emotional reactions. Are insects not capable of as much, or possibly more?

The idea of other species exchanging information, processing, and acting upon it is in its infancy. We still haven't fully absorbed it. We still find it disquieting to think of whales singing songs of love and seeking one another out in the vast reaches of oceans; woodpeckers thumping out a message on a dried branch like Morse code; the wolf urinating on bushes to establish his territory; turtles, birds, bees, woolly bears, bats, and woodchucks exchanging data; fish and other animals advising

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bees, are more adaptable to being moved. They tend to seek out their home hive if it has been moved nearby. How do we explain this difference between one strain of bee and another? It is not worth the trouble to speculate whether it is genetic transference of an acquired characteristic or some mystical force beyond us. A beekeeper in Maine, attending a conference of beekeepers there, expressed the enigma nicely, saying, "It is the fascination we have with the bees, the elusiveness of them that forms our attraction. Bees are one of the phenomenons of nature that God put on this earth that we can't understand but we attempt to manage."

THIRTY-FOUR



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As a field bee gets old and her wings begin to fray and wear out, when she is no longer able to fly great distances and carry heavy loads, she may be permitted to work inside the hive again, as she did in her youth, helping to care for brood or guard the entrance—light duty, as it were. This is probably the closest bees ever come to any expression of sentiment or gratitude for services rendered, but it probably represents less compassion than squeezing out the last semblance of usefulness she has to offer.

Even on the rare occasion when such charity is shown, a failing bee's days are numbered. When no longer useful to the community, she is gotten rid of, as an aging or infirm human worker may be fired or forced out of his job. Is this an arbitrary decision by some ruling authority? Or is it hive policy based on some criteria of efficiency that the aging can no longer measure up to, some inflexible scale that objectively determines job performance with no consideration of past contributions?

An infirm bee is not fired, in any sense we know, and left to try to find employment or safe harbor in her dotage. There is no farewell dinner, no symbolic presentation of a watch, no hypocritical speeches or mawkish sentiments inscribed on a silver tray enumerating her contributions and the esteem in which she is held. Instead, one of the young fielders may suddenly pounce on the unsuspecting superannuated member and drag her out of the hive to drop her unceremoniously over the landing board. And that is it.

HH 44
Since the victim can no longer crawl or fly back with her ravaged wings, she must starve or be eaten by enemies, a form of dispatch which may or may not be more merciful than its human counterpart of unloading the unwanted aged or ill worker no longer capable of productive labor.

Should the ousted bee manage to make her way back to the hive, a younger worker may grab her and fly a half-mile or so away to drop her to make sure there will be no second return, a disposal method gangsters may have borrowed from the bees, with cultural refinements.

HH 44
If even then the unwanted bee somehow manages to return again, no further time is wasted impressing on her the message that she is no longer welcome. Some bees, a "death squad" in effect, sting her to death or tear her to pieces and then go about their business, unmindful and uncaring, it seems, of her contributions to the community before she grew old and infirm from overwork and service to the colony. Her only real offense, like that of the aged human employee, was that she had nothing more left to give. This may be why socialism works in the hive but not in the competitive human marketplace. There is no place for heart or sentiment in the "perfect society."

I wonder, in passing, about this so-called death squad. Are its members volunteers? Assigned? Chosen by lot? Are they, too, specialists in their own way in the hive's division of labor as "undertaker bees" are specialists?

Generally, such Draconian measures are not necessary. Bees incapacitated by age or injury and no longer able to work may

remove themselves voluntarily by "committing suicide." The old or sick bee, at a time of her own choosing, simply crawls or drags her way painfully to the landing board and quietly topples over the edge, to perish in the tall grass or weeds below, so she won't be a burden to the colony, a final sacrifice for the collective good of the community to which she devoted her life and energies, and I do not know whether she is to be pitied or exalted.

THIRTY-FIVE



In paying tribute to the division of labor in the hive, we are likely to make the error of comparing it to a factory where workers are trained to perform a particular job and are limited to that one operation or task, repeating it endlessly, and that is all that is expected of them; if their function is changed or eliminated, the person must be retrained for another job or let go. That is not the way a beehive functions. There is a division of labor, as we have seen, but it is based less on individual preference than on the convenience of the colony. Certain bees may be specialists but they have probably had a turn at most jobs and are able to perform them in an emergency; even older workers whose time of secreting wax has past can, if need be, reactivate their wax glands. In a crisis each individual ceases whatever she is doing to pitch in and do whatever is necessary for the common good. Individual sacrifice for the good of all! That is the cachet of hive life; it is an immutable law.

Let us now observe the bees in a crisis situation, our focus on the indomitable water carriers. They are primarily in charge of regulating the hive temperature during the summer. It is

essential role, demanding expertise. If the queen is to lay eggs, a temperature of about ninety-four degrees Fahrenheit is necessary, and the hive must remain in the range of ninety-two to ninety-eight degrees for metamorphosis to occur. But if the hive gets too hot, the wax combs will melt and the delicate brood can bake; if it becomes too cool, the brood will chill and die.

Maintaining this critical level of heat requires almost constant vigilance and temperature control. In the cold months, heat is produced by clustering, but since most brood is raised in the summer, air conditioning is essential. Should overheating threaten from the sun beating on the closed, boxlike hive and all of the activity within, an emergency call is sent for water. Bees have an internal biological thermostat that triggers an alarm signal that is immediately relayed throughout the colony.

Field bees who are between trips drop whatever they are doing to rush to the nearest water source and scurry back with a mouthful of water. There, waiting house bees called from their regular jobs take the liquid from the fielders and spread it on the frames of honeycomb. All bees in the hive cease whatever they are doing to beat their wings vigorously, in unison. The fanners have been described as sitting like little living ventilators over the cells, driving the air toward each other and pushing it out through the entrance. Their fanning sets up a draft that evaporates the water, a primitive form of air conditioning that lowers the temperature, cooling the hive.

It is an ingenious system, much like one used in the Midwest before the advent of mechanical air conditioners; sweltering families would rig up a bale of straw at an open window, let water from a hose trickle through it and a fan inside would circulate the cooled air, lowering the temperature. But the bees developed their own method millions of years ago and incorporated it into their genetic pattern.

How do such things happen? Does one bee figure it out,

* Adi thinks that one could never have a war if people were good as bees. Ht

Alt
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Ht
Himself and the O.V. in relation to bees.

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He is laughing. "What the hell kind of beekeeper are you, letting your bees swarm?" he says. Then he admits that his hive also "threw a swarm" the previous week. "I've been too busy to look after them," he explains, almost apologetically.

"I checked the hive last week and there were no swarm cells," I reply, and I detect the same note of apology in my voice.

We both know the bees are full of honey and euphoria and not likely to sting, so we sit under a nearby pine tree and watch the spectacle together.

FORTY-EIGHT



MBF Before a swarm can issue, elaborate preparations must be made. Queen cells are capped and pupating princesses await within. Even before building these swarm cells, the bees raise drones so the virgin princesses will have mates. As soon as large numbers of drone cells appear, the colony has probably decided to swarm. Sexual logistics dictate this order, when it is recalled that a drone takes twenty-one days to form, compared to only sixteen for a queen, and twenty days more for a drone to become sexually functional, against only forty-eight hours for a queen. The decision to swarm is probably made at least a month before the actual departure.

Members of the swarm, just before leaving, fill themselves with honey; an average swarm carries with it about a pound and a half, enough to last several days and provide energy to build comb so the old queen can start laying brood at once. A hive without sufficient stores to spare will almost never throw a swarm.

On the day of departure all activity slows down. Bees that ordinarily would go to the fields hang around the hive, one of

the few times they will be seen loafing. Others cluster in a thick mat on the front of the hive; there is no room inside with so many bees at "home" and it is hot and uncomfortable. Only workers not included in the swarm go about their business as usual, the foragers departing for the fields and returning, as if all this unusual activity is no affair of theirs and they are not concerned. There is no suggestion of sentimental farewells.

Often it is believed that the queen leads the swarm, but this is not true; she is, as usual, a follower, taking orders. Several days earlier the bees cut down on her food so she will lay fewer eggs, becoming lighter and better able to fly. By departure time she may be a third smaller than usual and harder than ever to distinguish among the massed workers, themselves larger than usual after gorging on honey in preparation for leaving.

The queen not only doesn't lead the exodus from the hive, but is likely to be in the middle or near the end. She may be fearful and have to be pushed along, hesitate, or even try to drop back and have to be forced out. One thing is sure: the bees will not depart without her.

Swarming must be a traumatic experience for the queen who has never left the comforting darkness of the hive since her mating flight. She may, in terror or confusion, topple over the landing board and have difficulty rejoining the swarm, an indignity that must detract from the sublimity of the occasion.

If the queen has suffered the further indignity and mutilation of having her wings clipped, a drastic measure taken by some beekeepers to prevent swarming, she may fall off the landing board, incapable either of flying or returning to the safety of the hive, in which case she will perish. The swarm will then return to the hive, its mission aborted, the great moment turned into catastrophe.

A swarm is made up primarily of older workers, along with some younger bees and possibly a few fledglings who have never flown before. Young bees are needed to form wax and act as nurses. A swarm can consist of up to about 35,000 bees.

*at after July '44 seeing
himself as the creature whose
wound they looked to clip.*

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*MBF
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surrounding powers, there now was a block of concrete—a fear-inspiring block sprouting gun barrels. And this transformation—a source of joy for German nationalists but a more questionable development as far as the rest of Europe was concerned—had come about in the course of a war in which the new German great power had shown enormous strength as well as harsh toughness. The Franco-Prussian War of 1870–71 was not conducted with the same detached restraint as was the Austro-Prussian War of 1866. With the annexation of Alsace-Lorraine in particular, Bismarck can be said to have bestowed on Germany its *Erbfeindschaft*, its “traditional enmity” with France. Bismarck himself made a little-known but remarkable statement about this. As early as August 1871 he told the then French chargé d’affaires in Berlin, who promptly passed it on to Paris: “We made a mistake in taking Alsace-Lorraine from you if [we expected] the peace to be a lasting one. Because for us these provinces are an embarrassment, a Poland backed by France.” Apparently he well knew what he had done.

Why, then, did he do it? Historians are still at odds about the answer to that question. The national cry about bringing the old German Alsace annexed by France two hundred years earlier “back to the Reich” could hardly have motivated him. As far as Bismarck was concerned his new, Prussian-dominated German Reich was not identical with that ancient Reich.

* Gloom for A1 after Stalingrad

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A11
on
Stalingrad
in 1941

Hoffner

the economic interests of the working classes directly. In 1879 the Reichstag passed the Law of Protection of Agriculture and Horticulture, which provided for the introduction of protective tariffs on agricultural products.

One might say that, in the Bismarck era, the Reichstag was not only a political entity, but also a social policy.

Bismarck's era the Reichstag in its domestic policy was dominated by special-interest groups and political parties. The Agricultural Law of 1879, which provided for the organization of large and small farms, was not formed in the Reichstag. But the Central Industrialists, the Reichstag preceded it. So did the Reichstag-oriented light industry and finance and banking.

The unions were in the Reichstag and did not fight for better conditions, above all for higher wages. Bismarck's domestic

developments the popular Bismarck era remained the cause of the economic crisis of Bismarck's policies, the cause of his political failure, accused of having been

1942, 1944

conciliatory and diplomatic; his victories were rarely won by charm, and the bitterness which marked his life after his dismissal was already apparent in the hour of his greatest triumph in January 1871 ("I frequently had the strong wish to become a bomb and explode, so that the whole structure would collapse," he wrote to his wife from Versailles three days after the emperor's proclamation). One is tempted to speculate that Bismarck felt even then that he had overshot the goal he had reached in 1867, that he had allowed himself to be carried away by his alliance with the Nationalists, that he had achieved something that could not work and that in the long run would prove to be untenable. The deep pessimism with which he viewed his accomplishments is unmistakable, and that letter refers to the domestic condition of the Reich as well as to its foreign relations.

His domestic battles with the parties and the Reichstag became increasingly venomous. In 1867 he was still in comparatively high spirits when he proclaimed before the (then North German) Reichstag: "Let us put Germany into the saddle, so to speak! It will be able to ride." In 1883, quoting himself dispiritedly, he retracted this earlier optimism in a letter to Albrecht von Roon: "This nation cannot ride! . . . I say this without bitterness and very calmly: I see black for Germany's future." This passage refers to the domestic, not the external situation. But externally he felt oppressed

1935

Semites; as a result, many people
 ve that with this Hitler's anti-
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scence in the persecution of the
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 ie could hide Jews or help them
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1938, 1944

his anti-Semitic regulations. Still, Hitler's anti-
 Semitism was the line that separated the loyal
 followers of the Führer—the majority of the peo-
 ple—and the not insignificant minority of Antis,
 people who in the privacy of their homes railed
 against Hitler and his party, and who were con-
 vinced that this proved their adherence to tradi-
 tional values even if they no longer dared to speak
 out, let alone act. There always existed a substan-
 tial number of Antis who later, after Hitler's fall,
 liked to describe themselves as the "inner emi-
 gration," or even as the resistance. I believe that
 both these labels should be used with great
 caution.

Resistance was limited to very small groups,
 and occasionally to groups that were officially part
 of the regime, particularly in the military; outside
 the official apparatus no effective resistance was
 possible. The resistance of some of the churches
and of the Communists was ineffective because
neither was in any position to affect the policies
of the Führer state. In fact, there was only one
group that had the necessary leverage: the General
Staff of the army. There were two officers' plots,
one in 1938-39, when war was imminent, and the
other in 1943-44, when defeat was imminent.
 Only one of these plots was actually carried out:
 Count Stauffenberg's botched assassination of Hit-
 ler on July 20, 1944. Stauffenberg failed largely
 because he did not have the backing of the entire
 army command, only of a minority. Of this mi-

1941-1942, 1944-5

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Germans were determined to leave nothing but scorched earth behind. And the world will never forget the horror of the Final Solution, which began in 1941 in the occupied Soviet territory and in 1942 was extended to all of occupied Europe.

There were still moments in 1942 and 1943 when a desperate, suffering Russia appeared willing to let Hitler get out of the war in the East by a cease-fire if he were to withdraw to the old line of demarcation or the old German borders. Hitler never agreed to that—and in effect one can forget about all these conjectures. They never were seriously considered.

*
Stalin
says

The only question that must still be asked about the second half of World War II is why Hitler, in a situation with no prospect of victory and once his enemies, after some bickering, had reached agreement on Germany's unconditional surrender and carried the war into Germany, held out amid the ruins of Berlin until his last-minute suicide—and even managed to find fanatics ready to impose his will on a terrified populace.

Two theories have been advanced. According to one, Hitler never wavered in his belief in final victory. After all, in his own political life he had miraculously bounced back time and again. Perhaps he hoped that the East-West alliance would disintegrate at the very moment of victory, permitting him to make a separate peace with one and defeat the other. There is much to be said for such a scenario. In the winter of 1944-45 he still

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he came back to this, not publicly, but in secret meetings with his generals. He told them that he was like the spider in his web waiting for a falling-out between the West and the Soviet Union. The only thing wrong with this picture was that he was not the spider but the fly. He failed to understand that the disagreements over the postwar order and the ideological differences between the West and the Russians would not surface, let alone lead to an armed clash, as long as a Germany at war with both of them acted as a buffer. Before the possibility of a third world war could arise, Germany had to be defeated and occupied, the two big power blocs had to meet and confront each other in the heart of Germany. Every delay in this process kept the differences between the two blocs from erupting. As long as Germany stayed in the war, their conflict was bound to remain latent. Thus Germany's continued resistance prevented the very thing Hitler hoped for. His calculation about a possible disintegration of the East-West alliance, if indeed there was one, was a miscalculation. We have no proof that Hitler actually continued to believe in final victory up to the very end. His reasons for continuing the war to the last man might have been psychological rather than political.

1939 There was something mock-heroic about Hitler. According to fairly reliable sources, Göring allegedly told him in August 1939, "Let's stop this

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and the waging of war been arguments would have been advantages of a given undertaking, as was the question 1871.³ After discussion of the would have been up to the however, Hitler not only held of the functions of Chancellors, the Commander of the Armed the Army. Consequently, the ents as well as the final de. Here the carefully developed and political advisers clashed aps it would be more accu- and irrational impulses clus- which, in retrospect, one can and.

adership had devastating im- andist Hitler laid too much ord public opinion. For this g himself to make military uation of untenable outposts s has already been observed estige" strategy is the worst possible to bluff in military y find that the battle reveals that the next reverse, which unavoidable.

heless insufficient to explain manded that untenable posi- g timely reconnaissance and

ity in the vain hope of shortening erals were rightly very skeptical d the end of December 1870, the t only hardened resistance, which rvation forced the Parisians to

the fortification of suitable relief positions to the rear. The *War Diary* proves beyond doubt that the experts again and again urged this, but that Hitler was at best prepared to accede to their judgment only after valuable time had been lost, or even when it was already too late.

The basis for this principle of leadership can almost certainly be traced in part to Hitler's experiences as a corporal on the Western Front during the First World War.⁴ When in February and March 1917, the curved front between Arras and Soissons was shortened by withdrawing to the Siegfried Line, the retreat proved to be

"How very strongly Hitler continued to be affected by the memory of that time is shown by the protocols of his situation conferences. One very good example was an evening conference in June 1944:

"The Führer: 'At no place did we have (such an inferiority in the air) during the [First] World War. That I know. For example, during our offensive, during the great battle in France, we had the English completely chased away from the battle area. During the World War, we just didn't have such a pitiful situation [as now, following the Normandy invasion, with Anglo-American air supremacy]. Even in 1917 the situation was such that during the Battle of Arras, the Richthofen Squadron had completely scoured the sky. English squadrons . . . were absolutely repulsed. I myself saw, in part, how the remainder of ten planes were brought down, down to the very last one. We had complete freedom [from air attack] there. Also in the Battle of Flanders, when the first large-scale air battles, by the standards of the time, took place, where as a matter of fact seventy to a hundred planes were engaged on each side—that was a murderous struggle, but even so it could never be said that the enemy controlled the sky or flew around [at will]. Naturally they were already getting kind of fresh, and in 1918 it got worse.'

"Jodl: 'Then came the first flights of squadrons. Four hundred to five hundred.'

Another example is a reference Hitler made in connection with the unsuccessful German attempt to break the protracted stalemate at the Anzio beachhead by heavy counterattacks. Having learned that these were stopped by enemy artillery fire, he instructed that "future attacks should be carried out according to the principles of the offensive in 1918."

In the protocol of his conference with General Thomale in December 1944, Hitler said, on having been informed of the arrival of artillery units for two divisions:

"Something just occurred to me because people are always whining about getting reinforcements too late. For the second offensive in 1918, we started out marching on the evening of the 25th. We spent the night of the 26th in a forest and on the morning of the 27th we attacked. We marched at 5:00 A.M. The afternoon of the day before, we received our reinforcements for the great offensive at Chemins des Dames."

much more precipitate than the High Command had foreseen; understandably, the retreating units did not extend themselves to fight a delaying action for land that everyone knew would sooner or later be evacuated in any case. For Hitler, this memory crystallized in the maxim that defense lines to the rear exerted a "magnetic" force on the fighting troops, and that one should never tempt them by prematurely preparing defense lines behind them.⁵

This experience was complemented by still another of the same origin. Hitler, the former corporal, never forgot how easily the troops could break into a stampede once they had been squeezed out of the trenches, and how hard it was to stop the infantryman, the "poor worm" as he called him, in open country. What Hitler had learned in 1917-1918 was that it seemed better to hold on to present positions, no matter how high the casualty rate, no matter how vulnerable to air attacks and artillery fire, no matter how weakened by localized breakthroughs, than to order the troops to fall back across open country to the next defense line, though it might be operationally more favorable.⁶

⁵One of the countless examples is to be found in the *War Diary* coverage of the Adriatic sector of the Italian front during the last three months of 1944. On December 15, 1944, the Chief of the OKW Operations Staff informed the Commander-in-Chief Southwest (Italian theater) that the role of the Genghiz Khan-Line seemed to be more to attract German troops than to repel the enemy. The withdrawal toward it was being justified with (what the OKW regarded as) the very dangerous rationalization that forces would thereby be conserved and that it was necessary to deploy them in depth back to the rear echelons in order to prevent a breakthrough. The Führer, made wise by similar cases in earlier years, was expressing almost daily fears of such attitudes. For this reason, there were to be no further requests for permission to effect voluntary withdrawals.

The same attitude prevailed at a situation conference late in March 1945: "The Führer: . . . At least fifteen effective fighting units were lost in withdrawing from the *Westwall* because one could allegedly fight better in open country. . . ."

Then somewhat later the same evening, concerning the military leadership in the West, which had let itself be forced out of the fortifications:

"The Führer: . . . In this case the leadership performed absolutely miserably. From the top down, they drummed the idea into the troops that one can fight better in open country than in here."

⁶The Commander-in-Chief Southwest (Italy) was informed on February 22, 1945, that authorization to fight a delaying action rather than rigidly

In the final analysis, the First World War was a tactical success—though the Second—as plausible as the First—sufficient to explain the Ardennes Offensive. The underlying conception of motives, for he did not see the offensive operation

Strategically, the operation was thwarted from the beginning by the failure of General Patton's offensive. The failure of the approaches to the base had deprived this base. With amazing intention of response, the forces were forced to complete the operation. The forces were only a former German Wehrmacht. The ambition of carrying out an attack from the base at the expense of the base. The failure of the approaches to the base, the selection of forces met was a place to try to tear the cause of his under command level con-

Before the attack and alternatives did not exist. It was in fact no longer considering the possibility of a very important military success with

holding the line would be the present point in time will to fight."

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the High Command had foreseen; units did not extend themselves and that everyone knew would in any case. For Hitler, this memory of defense lines to the rear exerted a pressure on the troops, and that one should never abandon defense lines behind them.³ He was still another of the same type, never forgot how easily they had once they had been squeezed out was to stop the infantryman, the man in open country. What Hitler had seemed better to hold on to preserve the casualty rate, no matter how heavy the fire, no matter how weak, than to order the troops to fall back to the next defense line, though it might

In the final analysis, however, the identification of the corporal from the First World War with the Supreme Commander in the Second—as plausible as it may be in human terms—is by no means sufficient to explain Hitler's strategy. Once more we turn to the Ardennes Offensive as a test case. In order to grasp Hitler's underlying conception of strategy, we must ascertain his purpose and motives, for he did seize the initiative, this one last time, in an offensive operation.

Strategically, the Ardennes Offensive had its origins in the attempt—thwarted from the very beginning—to strike at the right flank of General Patton's forces which were overrunning France. The loss of the approaches to the Vosges Mountains to the west of the Rhine had deprived this sweeping maneuver of its anticipated tactical base. With amazing stubbornness, however, Hitler held fast to his intention of responding to attack with counterattack, so as not to be forced completely onto the defensive. But the retreating German forces were only able to come to a stop approximately along the former German *Westwall*. This meant that Hitler could realize his ambition of carrying out a powerful counterstroke only by mounting an attack from a stable front—rather than striking a devastating blow at the exposed flank of a moving armored column, as he originally had wanted to do. Once it was decided to attack from stabilized lines, the selection of the point at which the British and American forces met was obvious; such seams have always been the favored place to try to tear open the front of an opposing alliance. But because of his underestimation of the enemy, Hitler anticipated greater command level confusion among his enemies than actually occurred.

Before the attack was ordered, the entire plan was re-evaluated and alternatives discussed. The conclusion was reached that there was in fact no front more suitable than the one Hitler had chosen, considering the purpose he had in mind. This latter was, of course, a very important consideration. Hitler not only wanted an immediate military success which would reactivate his role in the war, but was

holding the line would be something "the Führer will . . . never give, since at the present point in the war it would be the ruin of the troops' morale and will to fight."

to be found in the *War Diary* coverage of the front during the last three months of the war. Chief of the OKW Operations Staff in the northwest (Italian theater) that the role of the front was more to attract German troops than to hold it was being justified with (what the Germans called) rationalization that forces would be necessary to deploy them in depth back to a breakthrough. The Führer, made was expressing almost daily fears of that there were to be no further requests for reinforcements.

At a staff conference late in March 1945: ineffective fighting units were lost in withdrawal; they could allegedly fight better in open positions.

ing, concerning the military leadership forced out of the fortifications: leadership performed absolutely miserably; the idea into the troops that one can win the war.

Italy) was informed on February 25: a delaying action rather than rigidly

also determined that it be visible enough to the eyes of the world to stabilize the dwindling prestige of the German Wehrmacht.

The recapture of Antwerp was established by Hitler as the goal of the offensive, his rationalization being that the city on the Scheldt had been the first undestroyed harbor that had fallen into the hands of the Allies, and that depriving them of it would consequently be a grave setback. Hitler thus failed to comprehend that with the help of sophisticated modern landing equipment his opponents were in a vastly better position to overcome the lack of normal harbor facilities than he assumed.

In any event, it was an elementary calculation that in case of a successful breakthrough, there would be a pointed spearhead a certain number of kilometers long on the left flank and on the right, and covering these flanks would take so many units per kilometer—an objective calculation based on repeated and carefully evaluated experience. But at the same time, the point of the spearhead could not be weakened if the attack were to reach its goal. Aside from headquarters troops there were thirty-two divisions available, and even by the most optimistic calculations it was absolutely clear that these would not be sufficient. Responsible officers pointed this out to Hitler repeatedly, but he would not let himself be talked out of pursuing the "greater solution"—the goal of Antwerp. The "lesser solution," recommended on the basis of General Staff calculations, provided first for taking Liège, and then (if the situation permitted) bearing right in order to force the British to draw back from the front they were presently holding. The objections to the "greater solution" were so obvious that Hitler, particularly after the experiences of the past months, should have been convinced of their validity. But he was not. Instead, he deluded himself into thinking that once the Americans and British started running, their effective fighting strength would drop below their nominal numerical strength, while on the other hand the strength of the German divisions, exhilarated by their wave of triumph, would actually be magnified. Insofar as he thereby transformed a strength ratio of 1 to 1 into a ratio of one-third to 1, Hitler thought he was in a position to dismiss all the experience of the experts.

In explaining how Hitler came to think in this manner, we must

assume that the experience he played an important role. He grew in time to seven hundred thousand, and finally millions: his opponents melted away. It would be similar was nourished years of the war. It had to be a "blanche conception"—as I would establish such an unreasonable Offensive.

To a certain extent, this was the impossible possible during the first phase of the Russian aggregate numerically superior back along the whole vast expanse of belief that this principle held true at the moment the German army entered 1941, Hitler was given to validate the conservative thesis that the essence was that it is better to potentially of the enemy, since in one's own unexpected successes, but not only failed to accept reality: the crucial borderline between Theodore Mommsen observed impossible is what distinguishes

Hitler the warlord, who did not accept even less counsel than more handicapped by the fact of propaganda, that his impression

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assume that the experience he had gained as a political party leader
played an important role. He began his party with seven members.
It grew in time to seven hundred, seven thousand, seven hundred
thousand, and finally millions, while at the same time the millions of
his opponents melted away.⁷ His confidence that military operations
would be similar was nourished by his successes during the first
years of the war. It had to be something on the order of this "ava-
lanche conception"—as I would like to call it—that led Hitler to
establish such an unreasonably ambitious goal for the Ardennes
Offensive.

To a certain extent, this avalanche or stampede effect had made
the impossible possible during the years before the war. Even during
the first phase of the Russian campaign, the Red Army—in the
aggregate numerically superior to the Germans—had been thrown
back along the whole vast expanse of the front, bolstering Hitler's
belief that this principle held true everywhere, even in war. But from
the moment the German armies were stopped at Moscow in De-
cember 1941, Hitler was given one object lesson after another to
validate the conservative thinking of the General Staff. Its quin-
tessence was that it is better to over- than to underestimate the
potential of the enemy, since one can afford to be surprised by one's
own unexpected successes, but not by his. Hitler, to the contrary,
not only failed to accept realistic estimates but actually lost sight of
the crucial borderline between the possible and the impossible. As
Theodor Mommsen observed, "Insight into what is possible and
impossible is what distinguishes the hero from the adventurer."

Hitler the warlord, who during the second half of the war ac-
cepted even less counsel than during the first, was thus more and
more handicapped by the fact that he remained a prestige-conscious
propagandist, that his impressions as a World War I corporal came

⁷In a conference late in December 1943, when the Army Chief of Staff
expressed his concern about the poor morale of the troops in the East, Hitler
responded by referring to his experience as a party leader. During the time
of his rise to power, he said, he used to receive reports from the local party
branches to the effect that the Socialists were unbeatable; but in every case it
had turned out to be the fault of the local party leader. Hitler was clearly
projecting to military affairs the experience he had gained as a party leader.

The commandant of Schneidemühl had also acted on his own authority after a twenty-one day siege. On February 14 he succeeded in breaking out toward the north, "since he was no longer able to fulfill his responsibility as a wavebreak from the suburbs which still remained in his control." Against this kind of argument there could be no objection. Moreover, there had been no capitulation. A thousand men succeeded in fighting their way out. The *War Diary* recorded: "The Führer did not regard this action unfavorably."

The most harrowing consequences of the wavebreak doctrine were suffered by Army Group Courland on the eastern shore of the Baltic. It was left on the headland between Libau and Riga in order to hold down as many units of the Red Army as possible. Once the overland route had been so thoroughly blocked that an evacuation southward to East Prussia was no longer feasible, there still remained the possibility of withdrawing units by sea; some were, in fact, saved that way; others that might have been fell victim to the doctrine.

Hitler clung to this principle to the end. In Admiral Dönitz' record of the dictator's situation conference of April 4, 1945, we read that the Acting Chief of Staff of the Army, General Krebs, reported that thanks to German troops "in East and West Prussia, altogether 193 Russian infantry divisions were tied down, thereby substantially relieving the pressure on other fronts."⁹ It is up to the military historians of the Soviet Union to judge whether the attack on Berlin was in fact delayed in this way. But whatever conclusion is finally reached, the findings will be irrelevant, since the delay would in no case have exceeded a few days or weeks. When the only purpose of a given strategy is to delay the inevitable, one can no longer seriously speak of it as "strategy" at all.

on July 17, 1944 (three days before the attempt to assassinate Hitler) when his staff car was strafed, his immediately suspected complicity in the opposition was discovered before he had recovered. Given the choice of either dying a hero and having a state funeral or else being arrested for treason, with only too foreseeable consequences for his family, he chose poison. For a moving account of Rommel's role in 1944, including the daring ultimatum to Hitler on July 15, 1944, challenging him immediately to draw the consequences of the catastrophic military situation—i.e., resignation, suicide, or an armistice (as discussed below in the text)—see Dr. Hans Speidel's *Invasion 1944* (Chicago, 1950).—ED.

⁹The figure of 193 is so high that it is probably an error.

4. Hitler's Prolonga

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Hitler's faith.¹ On the contrary, the situation continued to deteriorate so rapidly that the "run of bad luck"—Hitler's euphemism to comfort both himself and others—threatened to become a rout.² In September 1943, Goebbels—who with amazing but satanic powers of dissimulation conjured up before the German people to the very end the vision of ultimate victory, yet was himself clever enough to know how things really stood—asked Hitler whether he would reject negotiations with Churchill as a matter of principle. Hitler answered that in questions of personality there were no basic principles, but as Churchill was consumed with hatred and was all too deeply committed to his hostile views, no positive results could be expected. Hitler said, however, that he would be willing to negotiate with Stalin. Having gotten this far, Goebbels went on to say what he really had on his mind. "No matter what the situation may be now, I submit to the Führer that we have to come to terms with one side or the other. Never has the Reich won a two-front war. Therefore we simply have to find some way to get out of the two-front war."³

At the beginning of 1944, Goebbels drew up a forty-page memorandum in which he recommended peace negotiations with Stalin,

¹It was in 1943, of course, that Mussolini was toppled. At which point did the Duce come to realize that the Axis Powers would not be victorious? According to the information which Donna Rachele Mussolini gave to a journalist after the collapse, she awakened her husband during the night of June 21, 1941, because Hitler wanted him to know of the German attack on the Soviet Union. After hearing the news, he said to her: "My dear Rachele, that means that the war is lost." The accuracy of this account cannot be verified, but it sounds credible.

²In a letter dated June 23, 1960, Admiral Dönitz replied to my question whether he had witnessed any remark of Hitler's referring to the impending defeat: "I heard no clear statement by Hitler that the war was lost. In this respect he was completely reserved with me during my occasional visits to headquarters. On May 31, 1943, I had reported the collapse of [our] submarine warfare. . . . When reporting to Hitler on a later occasion, I met Goebbels with him. The topic of submarine warfare came up again. Goebbels stated that the collapse of the U-boat war was certainly the most serious defeat we had suffered. I said yes, since we now had to reckon with an overwhelming development of the enemy's power. Hitler seemed to agree, but said nothing."

³In 1943, Goebbels' adjutant Semler noted that Goebbels had recently been in an outright defeatist mood. At the table he had said: "If all our exertions, our work, our struggles are to prove futile, then death would come to me as a release. There would be nothing left for me in a world in which there was no room left for my ideals."

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Goebbels was of July 1944, for duction Albert Sp tary leaders whom end in October or I myself was of tl

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the situation continued to deteriorate—bad luck”—Hitler's euphemism to threaten to become a rout.² In who with amazing but satanic powers before the German people to the very contrary, yet was himself clever enough—asked Hitler whether he would recall as a matter of principle. Hitler's personality there were no basic principles, no positive results could be that he would be willing to negotiate. But, Goebbels went on to say what he better what the situation may be now, have to come to terms with one side which won a two-front war. Therefore to get out of the two-front war.³ Goebbels drew up a forty-page memorandum peace negotiations with Stalin,

Mussolini was toppled. At which point did Axis Powers would not be victorious? Donna Rachele Mussolini gave to a friend her husband during the night of him to know of the German attack on Jews, he said to her: "My dear Rachele, the accuracy of this account cannot be

Admiral Dönitz replied to my question of Hitler's referring to the impending war by Hitler that the war was lost. In this with me during my occasional visits to and reported the collapse of [our] submission to Hitler on a later occasion, I met marine warfare came up again. Goebbels at war was certainly the most serious as we now had to reckon with an overbearing power. Hitler seemed to agree, but

noted that Goebbels had recently been able he had said: "If all our exertions, futile, then death would come to me left for me in a world in which there

since it would be futile to talk with Churchill or Roosevelt. He sent it to the Führer Headquarters, but found that it never reached his still beloved Führer. Martin Bormann, who had risen to become the "brown eminence" of the Third Reich, had stopped it. Goebbels then traveled personally to the Führer Headquarters in order to put it to Hitler on a man-to-man basis, but he got nowhere at all.

Goebbels was not alone in his insight. Referring to the beginning of July 1944, former Reich Minister for Armaments and War Production Albert Speer stated at his trial in Nuremberg: "All the military leaders whom I knew said at that time that the war was bound to end in October or November, since the invasion had been successful. I myself was of the same opinion in view of the fuel situation."

The seriousness of the situation had already been candidly acknowledged in Führer Directive Number 51 of November 3, 1943, which read:

"In the East the extent of the territory does, in an extreme case, permit a loss of ground, even on a large scale, without dealing a fatal blow to the vital nerve center of Germany.

"In the West it is different! Should the enemy here succeed in breaching our defenses on a broad front, the consequences would soon be unforeseeable."

The consequences of such a deterioration of the situation had in fact already been drawn by the Führer Order of November 27, 1943, which stated that "the struggle for the existence of the German people and the future of Europe is approaching its high point. The need of the hour is for all reserve forces which the Greater German Reich can muster for deployment in this final battle. The striking power of our Wehrmacht has suffered badly through the battles of this summer, particularly in the East."

In his secret situation conferences, from which nothing was leaked, Hitler made himself even clearer. What was said on these occasions has survived only in fragmentary form, but there is a fragment from December 20, 1943, that is documentary evidence for Hitler's having said that an enemy attack in the West would decide the course of the war: if the attack were repulsed, the danger would be over, and troops could once more be transferred from the West to the East.

General Walter Warlimont, one of the few participants in those

situation conferences who is still alive, has confirmed to me that he repeatedly heard such arguments expressed personally by Hitler. The Assistant Chief of the Operations Staff of the OKW kept no personal journal at this time, so we cannot be certain that Hitler actually went so far as to say explicitly that the war would definitely be lost in case of a successful landing. But for General Warlimont—who originally made the point to me years ago and recently confirmed it when I consulted him while completing this study—"there was not the slightest doubt that this was the meaning of his words."

The new year brought the Anglo-American landing at Anzio-Nettuno on January 22, 1944, the danger of which had not seriously been considered. This landing behind the German front threatened to collapse the lines and open the road to Rome. Hitler ordered the most vigorous defense. Referring to the widely known book which he himself had certainly once devoured, Felix Dahn's dramatic *Struggle for Rome*, Hitler spoke of the struggle for Rome which was to begin within the next few days. It would not only be decisive for the outcome in central Italy, but was of wider importance: With this landing, the invasion of Europe planned for 1944 had begun.

The danger that arose in southern Italy could in fact still be contained, but not the landing of the Allies in Normandy that began on June 6. When it became clear that the Allied forces could not be thrown back into the sea, the time had come for Hitler—who still sought the miracle that could, as in the case of Frederick the Great, change the course of the war—finally to draw the consequences of the insight he had already acknowledged. He should either have requested an armistice or else have relinquished power, thereby freeing the way for another to initiate that absolutely unavoidable step.

But Hitler took neither course. Instead he clung to the fact that it was initially possible to hold the enemy with an improvised front, which had its historical parallel in the front that had been built by the French along the Somme and the Aisne as the "Weygand Line"—in this case minus the fortifications. To the "experts" it was clear that the German front, running across Normandy without even the support of natural obstacles, would suffer the same fate under concerted attack as had befallen the Aisne Front, which had been penetrated in several days by a frontal assault. Hitler alone closed his eyes and ears.

At the urgent request of the Commander-in-Chief, Hitler met with the staff on June 12 at his post near Soissons. As informed of the situation, the prospect of the new V-2 missiles struck England in their resolution to do more. Hitler had no significant change in his overall situation. Hitler spoke of the war as a whole invasion front. Initially, things stood at the front to his headquarters soon near his bunker.

On June 29 another day, Hitler saw to it that the staff met with the Commander-in-Chief to speak with the staff about the miracle weapons. The staff met with the Field Marshal von Rommel on July 2.¹ His successor was not, he thought, as hopeful of conflict between Rommel and the staff as the latter had studied Rommel's evaluation of the situation. Front could be held for 27 days, within two and a half months the thirty-first he was razor-sharp reckoning.

On that July 9, Hitler:

¹Rundstedt was restored to command in 1944, after his successor, Gerd von Rundstedt, was relieved in mid-August by the staff to serve on the Western Front.

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At the urgent request of Field Marshal von Rundstedt, and of the Commander-in-Chief of Army Group B, Field Marshal Rommel, Hitler met with them both on June 17, 1944, at a command post near Soissons. After having been objectively and unreservedly informed of the situation, he consoled his field commanders with the prospect of the new V-bombs. (Some 2,400 V-1 and 1,115 V-2 missiles struck England, all of which merely hardened the English in their resolution to destroy Germany. Operationally, the bombardment had no significance whatsoever.) After the conference, Rommel, speaking in a smaller circle, referred to the hopelessness of the overall situation. Hitler told him not to worry about the continuation of the war as a whole, but to concern himself only with his own invasion front. Initially, Hitler had wanted to see for himself how things stood at the front, but he broke off his field trip and returned to his headquarters sooner than planned after a wild V-missile struck near his bunker.

On June 29 another conference was held, but on this occasion Hitler saw to it that there was no opportunity for Rundstedt and Rommel to speak with him privately. Once more he talked about the miracle weapons. The only tangible result of this conference was that Field Marshal von Rundstedt was relieved of his command on July 2.⁴ His successor was Field Marshal Günther von Kluge, who a short time before had been at the Führer Headquarters and received the initial impression that Hitler's evaluation of the situation in the West was more accurate than that of the field commanders. It was not, he thought, as hopeless as Rommel had painted it. This element of conflict between Rommel and Kluge did not last very long; after the latter had studied the front himself, he had to concede that Rommel's evaluation was correct: as of July 9, 1944, the Normandy Front could be held for a maximum of two to three weeks. On July 27, within two and a half weeks, Patton began his breakthrough. By the thirty-first he was in the clear. Rommel's estimate had been razor-sharp reckoning.

On that July 9, Hitler was building his hopes—as he explained in

⁴Rundstedt was restored to command of the Western Theater in September 1944, after his successor, Field Marshal von Kluge, had suddenly been relieved in mid-August by Field Marshal Walter Model, who then continued to serve on the Western Front under Rundstedt.—ed.

the situation conference—on the new, highly secret jet fighter program, which he thought would break the enemy's air superiority: "The enemy will be amazed when in about four months the picture begins to change so far as air supremacy is concerned." It is hardly necessary to demonstrate that this hope was vain.⁵

From July 13 to 15, Rommel made certain once more that he had the confidence of his subordinate commanders. Then on the fifteenth he sent a teletype dispatch to Hitler which left absolutely no doubt where he stood. The original text had to be destroyed, but we know the content from Rommel's chief of staff, General Hans Speidel. In this dispatch, which had originally been drafted by Speidel, Rommel specified that in the past weeks the Western Front had suffered losses of 97,000 men but had received only six thousand replacements, and that for 224 lost tanks Rommel had received only seventeen new ones. The result was a shattering picture which led to his prediction that the enemy would inevitably break through within two to three weeks. The dispatch closed with the statement: "I must ask you to draw the consequences from this situation without delay." Two days later, on July 17, Rommel was severely injured when his staff car was strafed and his driver killed at the wheel.

"To draw the consequences" meant asking for an armistice. Hitler rejected this as brusquely as he had previous attempts to dissuade him from his morbid rigidity.

Still another field marshal called on Hitler during these weeks in an effort to bring about a cease-fire. This second appeal can be understood only if the following background is explained: By transmitting to Hitler Rommel's audacious dispatch of July 15, Field Marshal von Kluge, whom Hitler had elevated on July 3 to Commander-in-Chief of the Western Front (under whom Rommel was an Army Group Commander), had in effect endorsed its contents and identified himself with its conclusions. Kluge had soon come to

⁵The fact is that jet fighters were mass produced by the Germans before the end of the war, and that they proved quite effective in aerial combat. On March 18, 1945, for example, Me-262 *Schwalben* ("Swallows") shot down twenty-five bombers and five fighters attacking Berlin, without suffering a single loss. A total of 1,294 were built, but they could no longer seriously affect the course of the war, for, as Armaments Minister Albert Speer observed at Nuremberg, "jet planes were of no use without fuel."—Ed.

realize that the situation was had described to him in B sequent weeks constrained. Meanwhile, because of Kl following the assassination picious of him. Then, on close the Falaise gap—whi enth Army altogether in as the Sixth Army had been I found that it had complete Chief West. The field mars ward off disaster, and his bombers. Hitler became co attempting to negotiate a tr abruptly relieved him of his of the crucial Battle of the I Model.⁶ On his journey bac of the Franco-Prussian War took his own life by poison. Erwin von Witzleben, who Rommel, who was forced to

On the day of his death, a long letter to Hitler, in w take his own life and justifi should be unable to master t should fail to bring the hop my Führer, resolve yourse have borne such untold suff end to these horrors. . . . M greatness and military bearin determination to assert you

⁶Kluge had visited, during this 2nd Armored Division, whose clearly described, mimicking his little table before the situation m himself, "Where in the world is is no question but that Hitler's c

the new, highly secret jet fighter would break the enemy's air superiority: "even in about four months the picture of supremacy is concerned." It is hardly his hope was vain.⁵

He made certain once more that he subordinate commanders. Then on the night to Hitler which left absolutely no original text had to be destroyed, but Rommel's chief of staff, General Hans Guderian had originally been drafted by Hitler in the past weeks the Western Front, but he had received only six thousand tanks. Rommel had received only 120, which was a shattering picture which led him to believe that the situation would inevitably break through. The dispatch closed with the statement: "The consequences from this situation with effect from July 17, Rommel was severely injured and his driver killed at the wheel." "He meant asking for an armistice. As he had previous attempts to negotiate." "He meant asking for an armistice."

He appealed to Hitler during these weeks in a letter. This second appeal can be put in background is explained: By transatlantic dispatch of July 15, Field Marshal Kluge had elevated on July 3 to Commander of the Western Front (under whom Rommel was operating) had in effect endorsed its contents and conclusions. Kluge had soon come to

be produced by the Germans before the war and quite effective in aerial combat. On July 16, 1944, 62 *Schwalben* ("Swallows") shot down the attacking Berlin, without suffering a loss, but they could no longer seriously attack as Armaments Minister Albert Speer had ordered of no use without fuel."—ED.

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realize that the situation was in fact very different from what Hitler had described to him in Berchtesgaden, and the events of the subsequent weeks constrained him to become even more pessimistic. Meanwhile, because of Kluge's ambiguous stance during the hours following the assassination attempt, Hitler had begun to grow suspicious of him. Then, on August 15, as the Allies threatened to close the Falaise gap—which could have meant cutting off the Seventh Army altogether in as disastrous a pocket as Stalingrad, where the Sixth Army had been lost—the Führer Headquarters suddenly found that it had completely lost contact with the Commander-in-Chief West. The field marshal had personally gone to the front to ward off disaster, and his radio car had been destroyed by dive bombers. Hitler became convinced, however, that Kluge had been attempting to negotiate a treacherous armistice with the British. He abruptly relieved him of his command, replacing him—at the height of the crucial Battle of the Falaise Gap—with Field Marshal Walter Model.⁶ On his journey back to Germany, in sight of the battlefields of the Franco-Prussian War of 1870–1871, Field Marshal von Kluge took his own life by poison, thus evading the fate of Field Marshal Erwin von Witzleben, who was hanged, or that of Field Marshal Rommel, who was forced to commit suicide.

On the day of his death, August 18, 1944, Marshal Kluge sent a long letter to Hitler, in which he informed him of his decision to take his own life and justified his recent military measures. If Model should be unable to master the situation and the long-range weapons should fail to bring the hoped-for success, Kluge concluded, "then, my Führer, resolve yourself to end the war. The German people have borne such untold suffering that the time has come to put an end to these horrors. . . . My Führer, I have always admired your greatness and military bearing in this gigantic struggle, and your iron determination to assert yourself and National Socialism. If fate is

⁶Kluge had visited, during this tour of the front, the command post of the 2nd Armored Division, whose commanding general, Baron von Lüttwitz, clearly described, mimicking his gestures, how the field marshal, sitting at a little table before the situation map, leaning his head on his hands, sighed to himself, "Where in the world is that division? What happened to it?" There is no question but that Hitler's distrust was completely unfounded.

stronger than your will and your genius, then that is the will of Providence. You have fought a great and honorable fight. This is what the historical record will show. Prove yourself now to be so great as to put an end, if need be, to the hopeless struggle.—I take leave of you, my Führer, as one who stood closer to you, in the consciousness of having done his duty to the last, than you perhaps recognized. *Heil*, my Führer! [signed:] VON KLUGE, Field Marshal."

In terms of its content, this letter, in which one must try to overlook the hackneyed phrases and ignore the awkward invocation of Providence, is one of the most frightful documents of German history. In its tone it is reminiscent of the servile praise which General Paulus addressed to Hitler in his radio message of January 29, 1943. But there is a fundamental difference: Paulus was not bound by his radio message and survived the capitulation. Kluge stood to gain nothing, and wrote his letter because he hoped, at the end, to be able to serve his Fatherland by sounding a warning which could not fail to be heard. Presumably he believed that he would make the inevitable decision easier for Hitler by addressing him in this fashion. Whether this was the point or not, however, what he wrote, with the lethal poison already at hand, concerning Hitler's greatness, his admirable military bearing, his genius, must be taken literally. Thus spoke a field marshal who was one of the most intelligent generals of the German Army and whose whole background and tradition made him a stranger to fanaticism and faith in military miracles. Even he had fallen under Hitler's spell, to such an extent that only in the hour of his death did he dare to express freely his view of the situation. Still more frightful is Marshal von Kluge's concluding statement that he stood closer to Hitler than the latter realized. From his own point of view this may well have been correct; but he was apparently unaware that had he returned home he would have faced arrest as a proven traitor in Hitler's eyes. He went to his death branded by the enemy—as he noted in his letter—as a war criminal, rejected by all those who had sympathized with the July 20 plot because of his ambivalent stance, recognizing Hitler to the very end as a genius, but knowing only that he no longer enjoyed his full confidence and, as a matter of fact—though he was spared this knowledge—regarded by him as a traitor. How many have not also

become enmeshed in such stances! The fate of the Wehrmacht because of its dramatic leadership of the Wehrmacht is a shocking thing of all times created by his death, made

On August 31, 1943, Hitler briefed the new chief of the Army Group B at a conference with them. He said: "possible thing that a soldier 'to seek other than death' as far as he was concerned on the point of initiation to remain secret in order. As for the demand made by Hitler swept it aside, saying that the time is not yet in the position to adequately proved in my past, I do not need to serious military defeat. 'rally childish and naïve successes.'" Hitler's task saw the opportunity to be able to Germany and he would conclude it.

In military terms, I continued with unyielding to nothing less than to ask ourselves whether by any other hope at

In the conference (after passing judgment) wanted war and now " . . . The time will come become so great that

your genius, then that is the will of a great and honorable fight. This is show. Prove yourself now to be so be, to the hopeless struggle.—I take one who stood closer to you, in the his duty to the last, than you perhaps signed: J VON KLUGE, Field Marshal." letter, in which one must try to over- and ignore the awkward invocation of at frightful documents of German his- ent of the servile praise which General his radio message of January 29, 1943. ference: Paulus was not bound by his the capitulation. Kluge stood to gain because he hoped, at the end, to be able unding a warning which could not fail elieved that he would make the inevit- er by addressing him in this fashion. not, however, what he wrote, with the nd, concerning Hitler's greatness, his is genius, must be taken literally. Thus as one of the most intelligent generals whose whole background and tradition aticism and faith in military miracles. Hitler's spell, to such an extent that only he dare to express freely his view of the ul is Marshal von Kluge's concluding user to Hitler than the latter realized. this may well have been correct; but he at had he returned home he would have raitor in Hitler's eyes. He went to his y—as he noted in his letter—as a war ose who had sympathized with the July ivalent stance, recognizing Hitler to the owing only that he no longer enjoyed his atter of fact—though he was spared this im as a traitor. How many have not also

become enmeshed in similarly tangled webs of overpowering circumstances! The fate of Field Marshal Günther von Kluge, terrible because of its dramatic accentuation, was tragically symbolic of the leadership of the Wehrmacht under Hitler; and perhaps the most shocking thing of all was that Kluge's admonitions, though accentuated by his death, made no impression on Hitler.

On August 31, 1944, thirteen days after Kluge's suicide, Hitler briefed the new chiefs of staff of the Commanders-in-Chief West and Army Group B on their new assignment. In the course of his conference with them, he accused Rommel of having done the worst possible thing that a soldier could do in a difficult situation, namely, "to seek other than military solutions." There was no question, so far as he was concerned, that Field Marshal von Kluge had been on the point of initiating negotiations with the British, but this was to remain secret in order not to reflect shame on the Wehrmacht. As for the demand made by Field Marshals Rommel and von Kluge, Hitler swept it aside with the back of his hand: "I said right away that the time is not yet ripe for a political decision. That I am also in the position to achieve political successes I have, I believe, adequately proved in my life. That I would not let such an opportunity pass, I do not need to explain to anyone. But to hope, at a time of serious military defeats, for a favorable political moment, is naturally childish and naive. Such moments can come when one has successes." Hitler's task, as he saw it, was to keep his nerve. If he saw the opportunity to win a respectable peace that would be tolerable to Germany and also guarantee the life of future generations, he would conclude it.

In military terms, Hitler's senseless demand that the war be continued with unyielding tenacity amounted, under the circumstances, to nothing less than a complete inversion of morality. But we must ask ourselves whether his continuation of the war could be justified by any other hope at all—for example in terms of foreign policy.

In the conference of August 31, 1944, mentioned above, Hitler, after passing judgment on Churchill and Vansittart—who had wanted war and now could no longer back out of it—declared: "... The time will come when the tensions between the Allies will become so great that the break will occur. . . . Throughout history,

coalitions have always gone to pieces sooner or later. One has only to wait for the moment, no matter how hard the going." The historical example foremost in his mind was the withdrawal of Russia in 1762 from the anti-Prussian coalition in the Seven Years' War. In the course of the conference, Hitler continued the parallel: "Under all circumstances we will continue this struggle until—as Frederick the Great said—one of our accursed enemies grows weary of fighting on, and until we then achieve a peace which secures the life of the German nation for the next fifty or hundred years. . . ."

It was his mission, Hitler went on, to weather every crisis—unshaken by reverses—until the final moment of vindication. "My task," he affirmed, "especially since the year 1941, has been never to lose my nerve under any circumstances. . . ." In Hitler's comparisons of himself with German General Staff officers, he accused them of lacking his sort of energy: "If there is not a man in there behind it [i.e., the German struggle for survival] who by his very nature has a will of iron, then the war cannot be won. It is my criticism of the General Staff that instead of always radiating this iron will it has weakened front officers who have come to it, or when General Staff officers are sent to the front, they have spread the pessimism of the General Staff."

We are confronted here with the problem of coming to terms historically with Hitler's own understanding of his historical role, of deciding what, if anything, can be meaningfully concluded from these statements which Hitler made about himself. The first thing that comes to mind is the frequently quoted remark of the Swedish statesman Count Oxenstierna that the only thing one can learn from history is that people learn nothing from history. But the pessimism that underlies this observation does not actually go quite far enough. Certainly world history is a manual from which—if one reads it correctly—a great deal can be learned, and it is regrettable that politicians make so little use of it. It is much worse, however, when the manual is read falsely and cited in support of an abortive policy or strategy, as when the preacher quotes a verse from the Gospel as incontestable proof of the validity of his sermon.

This, essentially, was Hitler's response as his situation became absurd. He appealed to history, which he had studied with the arbi-

trary violence of an autage of cabinet wars, the of Russia had indeed Second World War were not decisive. What Hitler had provoked a plete the German cat commitment of each all between them. Thus w ever he had—the psych

The straw to which l mandy Front was the A the situation on all fron Hitler began to realize Our witness for this is dictated during his impi April 22, 1945, of his c The dictator went on t decision, the most impc should never have left th

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response as his situation became which he had studied with the arbi-

trary violence of an autodidact—and he interpreted it falsely. In the age of cabinet wars, the succession of a new monarch to the throne of Russia had indeed helped the great Hohenzollern, but in the Second World War even changes of government on the enemy side were not decisive. What could not be doubted was that the coalition Hitler had provoked against himself would hold together to com- plete the German catastrophe; the strength of the anti-German commitment of each ally was stronger than any mistrust or antipathy between them. Thus we see that Hitler no longer understood—if ever he had—the psychology of his foreign opponents.

The straw to which he still clung after the collapse of the Nor- mandy Front was the Ardennes Offensive. But by the time it began, the situation on all fronts had deteriorated so drastically that even Hitler began to realize the ultimate hopelessness of the situation. Our witness for this is once more General Jodl. In the statement dictated during his imprisonment, he reports that Hitler told him on April 22, 1945, of his decision to remain in Berlin and die there. The dictator went on to say: "I should already have made this decision, the most important of my life, in November 1944, and should never have left the headquarters in East Prussia."

Hitler had not made that decision in November, however, but instead had employed his perverted logic to argue that in the end Germany would have to win. "It is only a question of who holds out longer," he said at the end of December 1944. "The person holds out longer for whom everything is at stake. For us everything is at stake. . . . If we were to say today we have had enough, we quit—then Germany would cease to exist."

At the end of 1944, Hitler still could not bring himself to the final decision, though from the latter part of December he must have been able to see that the Ardennes Offensive was a failure. He deluded himself by pretending both to himself and to others that the battle had not ended with a genuine decision that incontrovertibly revealed the relative power of the contestants. The outcome was rather the end result of a chain of unfortunate circumstances. At the end of December, he summed it up in a discussion of the next operations: "One thing has now become very clear again, and there can be no doubt about it: with the first operations we really had

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particularly bad luck. It was bad luck in a number of different respects." That is a shocking statement. It may at times be appropriate to use the expression "bad luck" for private calamities, though even there it often has a patronizing tone. But it was an outrage for Hitler to employ this trivializing term to the last great exertion of the Wehrmacht, which had cost tens of thousands their lives or health and which—planned and carried out as it was under the circumstances as they developed—was condemned to failure from the very beginning. The point was that by thinking in terms of mere "bad luck," Hitler once more suppressed whatever insight was building up within him and thereby enabled himself to go on with the long-since irretrievably lost war.

The abortive offensive had made clear not only the aerial but also the armored superiority of the enemy. Yet Hitler did not allow himself to be shaken; he placed his confidence in Karl Otto Saur from Speer's Ministry of Armaments and War Production. Saur was a tried and tested master of improvisation, though he did have a tendency to calculate mere possibilities as accomplished facts. In the previously cited conference at the end of December 1944 with General Thomale, who was Chief of Staff of the Inspector General of Armored Forces, Hitler said: "Today I spoke with Saur. He said he hopes to reach a production of 1,500 tanks and self-propelled assault guns this month. The important thing is that the replacements go to Model [on the Western Front] and, above all, quickly enough so that we can move again."⁷ No doubt when Hitler spoke these words he was convinced by them, though at some deeper level his negative insight may already have prevailed.

In January 1945, there were new factors thrown into the balance

⁷The production figure of 1,500 tanks which Hitler cites is in itself not grotesque. What is astounding is the underlying assumption that under the prevailing conditions in Germany in the winter of 1944-1945, most of those armored vehicles would be able to reach the front, or once there, have fuel to operate. Albert Speer had succeeded in tripling German war production from 1942 to 1944, despite aerial bombardment, but of 1,764 tanks built from September to November 1944 only 1,371 could even be delivered to the Wehrmacht. For a concise general introduction to the problem of economic mobilization and war production in the Third Reich in the context of Hitler's ideology, see this editor's review article, "Hitler's Fatal Mistake," *Air University Review*, XXI (May-June 1970), 82-90.—ED.

that should have touched on the oil sealed by the loss of fuel production. oil fields, which at —though most in strategic priorities, place to the oil are without this oil [ref. tion] it is not possible was lost and the end more—despite his —failed to reach t

The power of s despite his inner st uncanny. Even so evade it. On May Führer gave expres will be the master o but these will unde the way to world Europe will be to a as we have seen, ev —as his adjutant from that time on h with the intention returned each time

Even as late as hopeless. Hitler ha the *Gauleiter* gath his personality he v to hold on. Even d

"It was the twenty-t Hitler proclaimed the the assembled *Gauleit* mation to the Germa of the war within the

far as he was concerned, and to his intimates he spoke very critically of the *Gottgläubigen* or "Believers," who counted on his support.¹

For Jesus as Savior there was, of course, no room in Hitler's view of things, but he recognized Jesus' human greatness. Hasselbach testifies: "Hitler saw Christ as a unique person whose life work was dogmatically reinterpreted in essential respects during the following centuries in the interest of the Church and has therefore been handed down in a distorted form. [Hitler thought that] as a Galilean, Christ was of Aryan descent, and quite apart from his ethical values, he had to be admired for the genius he showed in leading the struggle of the people against the power and pretensions of the corrupt Pharisees." Hitler was not the first to propose this naive and contrived "rehabilitation."

Instead of "God," Hitler used the word "Providence," which had become common in the eighteenth century and continued to be used by religious liberals, or else he spoke of "the Creative Power."² Whoever looks through a telescope or a microscope, he thought, will recognize the laws of nature: "Then a person really does have to become humble." When Hitler survived the assassination attempt of July 20, 1944, he attributed it to Providence, which seemed almost blasphemous to people who thought in Christian terms, but there is no reason to question Hitler's sincerity about this interpretation. In a conversation in October 1941, he took an explicit stand against pure atheism: "The fact is that we are weak creatures, but that there is a creative power. It would be stupid to try to deny it. The person who believes in something which is untrue stands higher than the one who believes in nothing at all."

To the degree that Hitler had any concrete conception of what he called Providence, it was related to his biologically oriented view of life: "The only thing to do, then, is to study the laws of nature,

¹The so-called *Gottgläubigen* or "Believers in God" rejected conventional Christianity but insisted they were not atheistic. Many National Socialists were *gottgläubig* —ED.

²When Hitler on occasion spoke of the "Almighty Creator of this world," this was undoubtedly a calculated concession to the sensibilities of his audience.

so as not to attempt to do otherwise w to believe in a divi the species."

These conviction but emerged from One of the most i the self-proclaimed of Bio-Genetics," *Universe* (first put the German Mon Haeckel's teaching; popular series of (1899), promoted

This faith in Pr Hitler's mind with was dominated by as leader of the ne physicians, report dence. He was . . . everything and to by the thought tha

Hitler's self-cor of Providence, an more strongly he c to pray in the hou did fall back on Providence that c

14. Hitler's Moral Logical Con

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General Jodl, in his Nuremberg cell, begins his reflections on Hitler as a strategist (translated in full as Appendix II) with the thought that, in modern war, strategy includes foreign and domestic policy, economic mobilization, propaganda, and leadership of the people, so that "no general but only a statesman can be a strategist." Any final judgment of Hitler's leadership must consider his effectiveness in all these peripheral areas—a task beyond the scope of this book.

17. Willpower: The Dominating Force

At the end of August 1944, as the breakthrough in the West became apparent following the landings in Normandy and in southern France, Hitler expanded on the subject of willpower in a conference with two generals:

"My task, especially since the year 1941, has been never to lose my nerve under any circumstances, but rather, if there is a collapse somewhere, always to find solutions and expedients in order to set things moving again. . . .

"For the past five years I have cut myself off from the other world. I have neither visited the theater, heard a concert, nor seen a film. I live only for the single task of leading this struggle, because I know if there is not a man in there behind it who by his very nature has a will of iron, then the struggle cannot be won. . . ."

Not to lose one's nerve, to have a will of iron—these two phrases are keys to the understanding of Hitler. Everyone who had the opportunity to observe Hitler closely agreed that the most conspicuous thing about him was his will. But for the conduct of the war this will had a dark side, as more than one of Hitler's generals bear witness. General Alfred Jodl describes Hitler's actions after Stalingrad this way: "From then on, he intervened more and more frequently in operational decisions, often down to matters of tactical detail in order to impose with unbending will what he thought the generals simply refused to comprehend: that one had to stand or fall, that each voluntary step backwards was an evil in itself." General Heinz Guderian, speaking of Hitler in the final phase of the war, gives an even stronger description: "With the grim tenacity of a

fanatic, he clutched at one last imagining would save him at compelling willpower was not dominated him completely: "He had said it so often; now he al-

Field Marshal Erich von Manstein's notion of will as nothing less than military leadership." In Hitler's transformation into belief down to demonstrate the correctness of success of his orders." In its is a positive characteristic to sustain his position. In the case to his belief in his "mission," rigidity as well as to the opinion beyond the limitations set by

Professor Carl J. Burckhardt, Commissioner in Danzig had treated into still deeper levels. Hitler would immediately adapt to circumstances, but that in doing so he had freedom of choice despite the almost total lack of freedom, he ruled. Between himself and there was what amounted to a cumbed as did all those whom

What Burckhardt had in mind was the diary of Hitler's army adjutant. On 2, 1942, Hitler declared the operational but psychological and public opinion and morale of the German people. He elaborated on his explanation of what had to be "broken out, . . . to One sees with tangible clarity how he was on having his way despite all mechanically reacted to the menacing military catastrophe and it already was.

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 iction: "With the grim tenacity of a

fanatic, he clutched at one last straw which he deluded himself into
 imagining would save him and his work from going under. His
 compelling willpower was entirely devoted to this thought which
 dominated him completely: 'Never yield and never capitulate!' He
 had said it so often; now he also had to act accordingly."

Field Marshal Erich von Manstein characterized this overestima-
 tion of will as nothing less than the "decisive factor in Hitler's
 military leadership." In Hitler's view it "would only have to be
 transformed into belief down to the youngest grenadier in order to
 demonstrate the correctness of his decisions and to guarantee the
 success of his orders." In itself, Manstein points out, willpower
 is a positive characteristic without which no military leader can
 sustain his position. In the case of Hitler, however, it was linked
 to his belief in his "mission." "Such a belief leads inevitably to
 rigidity as well as to the opinion that one's own will can reach even
 beyond the limitations set by hard reality. . . ."

Professor Carl J. Burckhardt, who as League of Nations High
 Commissioner in Danzig had personal contact with Hitler, pene-
 trated into still deeper levels of the phenomenon. He found that
 Hitler would immediately adapt his actions to changing circum-
 stances, but that in doing so he simultaneously divested himself of
 freedom of choice despite the power that he possessed: "In his
 almost total lack of freedom, he stood very close to those whom
 he ruled. Between himself and the overpowering circumstances,
 there was what amounted to a mechanical force to which he suc-
 cumbed as did all those whom he had chained to himself."

What Burckhardt had in mind is illustrated by two entries in the
 diary of Hitler's army adjutant, General Gerhard Engel. On October
 2, 1942, Hitler declared the "capture of Stalingrad not only for
 operational but psychological reasons urgently necessary, for world
 public opinion and morale of [Axis] allies." On the tenth, he
 elaborated on his explanation of the attack by saying that Stalingrad
 had to be "broken out, . . . to rob Communism of its holy shrine."
 One sees with tangible clarity how Hitler the strategist, who insisted
 on having his way despite all the warnings of the experts, almost
 mechanically reacted to the nonmilitary consequences of the threat-
 ening military catastrophe and thereby only made it far worse than
 it already was.

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Introduction 5 A

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Professor Schramm was not in Germany to witness Hindenburg's betrayal of his supporters when he appointed none other than his defeated Nazi opponent to the chancellorship. At the beginning of 1933 Schramm had gone to Princeton University on a fellowship, returning to Göttingen later the same year. He continued his teaching and medieval studies undisturbed until the war, when, as a reserve officer, he was called to active service. Given staff assignments in which he invariably was charged with the additional duty of keeping the unit war diary, Schramm was ordered to Hitler's headquarters in 1943 to keep the official diary of the High Command of the Wehrmacht. Understandably the professional soldiers of the German General Staff wished to entrust this responsibility to a professional historian.

Until replaced by Schramm in 1943, Helmuth Greiner, originally from the Reich Archives, had kept the diary. But he was neither a party man nor a regular officer, so he was vulnerable. Using a petty conflict with a minor Nazi official as a pretext, the head of the Party Chancellery, Martin Bormann, was able to prevail upon Hitler to transfer Greiner into the field. The generals had every reason to be disturbed by this action, surmising that Bormann had moved against Greiner so as to free his position for a militant Nazi.

The generals had a vested interest in the scrupulous objectivity of the historical record. Few, if any, could foresee in any detail what was to come. But they had already experienced serious conflicts with Hitler, whom they did *not* venerate as "the greatest warlord of all times." As hardheaded professionals, they knew the record would bear them out if it were kept by a professional rather than a party hack. So when Greiner, a reputable military historian tailored to their tastes, was forced out, they were desperate to find the right sort of replacement quickly. Fortunately, a colonel on the Operations Staff remembered Schramm, at whose home he had been a guest while on garrison duty in Göttingen before the war. With an alacrity unusual even in German military practice, the assignment was made, effective January 1, 1943.

Things went smoothly enough for Schramm until 1944, when his sister-in-law was executed for opposition to the Nazi regime. At about the same time, formal allegations of his own unreliability were

Frankreich, 2 vols., Europe as a whole history of the medi- 1 (*Kaiser, Rom und* gnificantly illustrated ory of the orb from futherich, *Denkmale* surviving monuments th—of the medieval derick II (1962). Al- ographs, articles, and *Papste: Gesammelte* (1970) established him ed, particularly since a history of German the beginning of the social and economic 1 century (*Hamburg*, and a cultural history imily during the past . His three most im- in collaboration with igh Command of the Hitler's conversations, the war (*Geschichte War Diary*, as trans- sider public under the th excerpts from the her Führer (1962; 2nd blished in Schramm's ge bibliography of his ng reviews, plus some which he supervised cy *Ernst Schramm zu* 90-321). er: *The Experience of* p. 93. "Thalburg," as is actually Northeim,

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A 6 Hitler: The Man and the Military Leader

transmitted to the Führer Headquarters from Göttingen by Himmeler's security service. Fortunately Schramm's superior officer, General Alfred Jodl, disregarded these charges, so that he was allowed to retain his position to the very end. This meant that he was able, in defiance of Hitler's destruction order, to save copies or drafts of the greater part of the official diary covering the years 1943-1945. His predecessor, Greiner, meanwhile had secretly hidden copies of his drafts covering the first years of the war. Thus it was possible for Schramm, in association with Professors Hans-Adolf Jacobsen (Bonn), Andreas Hillgruber (Freiburg), and Walther Hubatsch (Bonn), three of his former students, to reconstruct and publish this extraordinary document as a whole. Comprising well over six thousand printed pages, the *War Diary of the High Command* is an absolutely unique historical record. No such compilation from the highest echelon is available on the history of the war as waged by the United States, the United Kingdom, or, for that matter, any other major power.

The first of the two essays in this volume, "The Anatomy of a Dictator," is based primarily on the record of Hitler's own self-revealing statements made during and after meals at his headquarters on the Russian Front from July 1941 through July 1942. This information is frequently supplemented by insights Schramm gained while in the Führer Headquarters from the beginning of 1943 until the end of the war, as well as by what he was able to learn during postwar internment from persons who had been very close to Hitler. Schramm himself never conversed with Hitler and on only a few occasions was he in a position to observe him for an extended time. He was, however, in daily contact with officers directly under Hitler's influence, and immediately after the war he was able to confer at length with two of Hitler's personal physicians as well as his dentist.

The picture of Hitler which flows from Schramm's skillful pen is worlds removed from the widely known caricature of a petty little street-corner agitator with a Charlie Chaplin moustache. A certain sinister pettiness is there, to be sure, and it is more specifically documented than ever before. But this is not the point. In "The Anatomy of a Dictator," the awkwardly woven veil of uneasy familiarity, insecure contempt, and feigned amusement, which for so long has

spared us from his stripped off. No realizing the folly in America by war postwar revulsion bearable tension. name-calling is irresponsible. So concerned, such trivial *Who was this man*

Many studies impact upon history the man himself associates, and countless innocents once have been since Freud, but even vitally important.

Schramm's sensitive understanding of the character of Hitler's conversational material and lays it thereby sketching he never loses sight of lies in its quasi and interpretation not "Diagnosis"

Only in one basis of the coincidences with Hitler Schramm's reaction about his own regarded as delusional could be extreme man; hence Schramm's study as of

mentary instinct for power and his utter ruthlessness in exercising it. We know of his unspeakable crimes against minorities, the German people, and mankind. Now, in these essays, Schramm has brought us a long step closer to an understanding of Hitler the man. Schramm clearly has no intention of changing, let alone basically revising, the general conception of Hitler that has come to be accepted by most German and American historians, but he has suggested that it may not do full justice to that uncanny and inscrutable dictator's personality. In a number of important respects, certainly, Schramm gives us a far more sophisticated picture of Hitler than we have had.

At the same time, however, Schramm's interpretation of Hitler is disturbing. It is disturbing to see in that consummately evil man so many commonly and legitimately admired virtues so clearly mirrored. They are not even parodied; they are genuine. Hitler was, beyond any doubt, a man of uncommon self-discipline who led what can be fairly described as a relatively austere personal life. It is not congenial to think of him in this way. It is not congenial to see him portrayed as a charming gentleman with a quick wit and a wholesome sense of humor. Certainly he was also a personally brave man with an excellent combat record. He had been a common soldier during the First World War, serving as a regimental courier. Before the end of 1914 he had received the coveted Iron Cross Second Class, and before the end of the war one of Germany's highest decorations, the Iron Cross First Class.⁵ On the basis of a close reading of his conversations, there is, furthermore, little doubt that Hitler took friendship seriously and in many cases was a sensitive and loyal friend, not to mention being a tirelessly hard worker.

Thus by conventional standards Hitler could *and did* command

the students but also prestigious faculty members. It was the Catholic Center party which provided Hitler the votes in the Reichstag that were essential for passage of the "Enabling Act" granting him dictatorial powers in March 1933. The Vatican, with the Concordat later that year, was the first foreign power to conclude a major treaty with the new and still rather widely distrusted Nazi regime. Because of the papacy's great moral prestige both in Germany and abroad, the Concordat was, of course, exceedingly valuable to Hitler.

⁵On Hitler's war record and his experience of World War I, see Chapter IV, "Hitler Finds His Home" in Konrad Heiden's dated but still valuable *Der Fuehrer: Hitler's Rise to Power* (Boston, 1944), pp. 77-86.

respect, aside from ordinary mind and emotion that in Hitler's case and perhaps not attempted to deal with politician or even him. It is now clear War, for example, Britain were mistaken accommodation with

More than any which Schramm sin, not merely the superb dissimulator. It was ground of Hitler's b who dealt seriously betray them as he ruthless opportunism that his antagonist is only by force of arms 1938, who could have Chancellor was an I type suggested in *lit Jekyll and Mr. Hyde*

Hitler's success, directness with which the inefficiency or in during the thirties. F

⁶One aspect of the a tendency to regard him the initial publication the first essay in this vol Roper, author of *The L* essay which did much to as the introduction to a *Hitler's Secret Convers* professor writes of Hitler, the expression of festering heap of refuse.

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anyone attempting to follow the main thoughts or to trace the logic of their relationships with each other will become aware of how many gaps and breaks the structure has as a whole.⁵

As far as his attempt to provide himself with historical background was concerned, it must be noted that even during the war, despite the great pressures and the excessive burden of thousands of details, Hitler still managed to read. He mentioned to his meal-time companions, in connection with a history of mankind which Bormann had given him, that he had been much interested in Franz Petri's book on the Germanic heritage in the Walloon areas of Belgium and in northern France, a scholarly study which had been brought to his attention by a newsreel correspondent. In another conversation he showed that he was familiar with Karl Pagel's recent history of the Hanse. Occasionally he had General Walther Scherff, the Chief of Military History at his headquarters, provide him with the four-volume set of the speeches of William II, to see how the Kaiser had addressed the German people. Once he unexpectedly came upon General Scherff reading Ernst Kantorowicz' biography of Frederick II, the medieval Hohenstaufen emperor; yet he did not, as feared, make a derogatory remark about the emigrant author, but only mentioned that he himself had read the book twice. According to his physician, Dr. von Hasselbach, Hitler also felt "obliged to look through the principal German newspapers and magazines regularly." But no systematic attempt was made to ac-

⁵This is the reason why it was so difficult to reduce Hitler's speeches to a clearly outlined summary, as I was able to observe when it was made possible for me, through personal connections, to hear a speech which Hitler delivered on January 27, 1944, to generals brought in from all fronts. Its purpose was to give them all a massive "booster shot" (as it was put at the time) on the eve of the Allied landing in the West, which was anticipated in the next few months. I sat in the last row of the meeting room at the *Wolfsschanze* and made notes on Hitler's presentation, despite the fact that it was prohibited, since I was not endangered from behind and was unobserved from in front. But when, on the basis of my notes, I attempted immediately afterward to reconstruct Hitler's line of thought, I found out that this was possible only in very approximate terms; though he had never lost sight of his goal, he had gone off on many tangents and permitted himself many interjections in and interruptions of his line of thought.

it's all going on at once.

quire reading material that would come into his hands was largely a

When in 1944 the suspicion arose greatly concerned his doctors, might of the assassination attempt of July nine poisoning, Hitler, before consulting to figure it out for himself with the to examine controversial issues per number of reference works at hand that owed something, no doubt, to man who never fully trusted anyone

Hitler occasionally observed, as "that hardly a day passed when he the essential contents of a book." He and early morning hours, the only ~~Seibach~~ goes on to say that Hitler ~~cc~~ books page by page, but at the same through" cannot simply be dismissed for he did grasp and retain the essential fided that he read books from back to the purpose of assuring him that the ~~c~~ worthwhile. If not, he either laid it as: it as he needed to polemicize again vinced Hitler became of the unass *schaung*, however, the less question into an intellectual dialogue with an reflecting on what he read. Consequently of discovering the cultural Hitler's thought to reconstruct a list read.⁶ Considering the intellectual ~~vi~~ whatever he read to his preconception certain intellectual affinities or parallel

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⁶It is sufficient here merely to note Hitler: during [his] youth no two other men than Fridtjof Nansen and Sven Hedin."

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quire reading material that would be of interest to him, so what
came into his hands was largely a matter of chance.

When in 1944 the suspicion arose that Hitler's weakness, which
greatly concerned his doctors, might not be due to the aftereffects
of the assassination attempt of July 20 but rather to a case of strychnine poisoning, Hitler, before consulting his physicians, attempted
to figure it out for himself with the help of medical books. He liked
to examine controversial issues personally, and he always kept a
number of reference works at hand in his living quarters, a practice,
that owed something, no doubt, to the perpetual suspicion of this
man who never fully trusted anyone.

Hitler occasionally observed, as Dr. von Hasselbach reports,
"that hardly a day passed when he did not work his way through
the essential contents of a book." He did this during the late night
and early morning hours, the only time when he was alone. Has-
selbach goes on to say that Hitler could not possibly have read his
books page by page, but at the same time the expression "work
through" cannot simply be dismissed as conceited exaggeration,
for he did grasp and retain the essential content. Hitler himself con-
fided that he read books from back to front, a procedure that served
the purpose of assuring him that the content of the book at hand was
worthwhile. If not, he either laid it aside or got only as much out of
it as he needed to polemicize against the author. The more con-
vinced Hitler became of the unassailable validity of his *Weltan-*
schauung, however, the less question there could be of his entering
into an intellectual dialogue with an author, calmly evaluating and
reflecting on what he read. Consequently, it seems futile for the
purpose of discovering the cultural and intellectual influences on
Hitler's thought to reconstruct a list of books which he may have
read.⁶ Considering the intellectual violence with which he adapted
whatever he read to his preconceptions, one can at most speak of
certain intellectual affinities or parallels.

It would certainly have been conceivable for a man of such om-

⁶It is sufficient here merely to note Hitler's remark of May 21, 1942, "that during [his] youth no two other men had interested [him] as much as Fridtjof Nansen and Sven Hedin."

12. Hitler's Interest in Medicine and Natural Science;
His Pseudo-Darwinism

Hitler was free of superstition and spoke with scorn of the "horoscope swindle" in which so many Nazi party functionaries, from Hess and Himmler down to the grass-roots level, believed. For tactical reasons he did go so far as to make some concessions to the continuing superstition of the masses on various points, for example, with measures involving the number thirteen.

We have the testimony of his personal physician, Dr. von Haselbach, that Hitler's knowledge in the medical field was above average. "He saw to it that he was regularly informed about the progress being made and solicited literature on it. Nevertheless, he did not venture to measure his judgment against that of the professional, nor did he attempt to influence his decisions. He asked for an explanation of the reasons [for the doctor's decisions] and wanted to have explained as precisely as possible the way in which the various medications would work. It was entirely in accord with this critical attitude toward medical questions that he ridiculed nostrums, but fully recognized the triumphs of scientific medicine [such as] the success of vaccination in preventing smallpox epidemics throughout World War I. In other respects, he harbored prejudices which he refused to change, for example, the erroneous opinion that the human body is fundamentally vegetarian, and that it consequently will perform better with vegetarian nourishment than with a mixed diet of meat and vegetables."

Hitler's interest in medicine stemmed largely, of course, from his concern with his own health. If a question disturbed him, he referred to professional reference works which stood at his disposal, as for example when he came down with jaundice during the summer of 1944. Even in areas in which the layman normally relies on the physician, he had his own opinions. He regarded cancer as he once explained to his listeners as the result of a sustained poisoning of the human organism, presumably caused by improper nourishment.

Hitler was interested in astronomy and passed on the impressions he had picked up in his random reading as irrefutable statements of fact. The craters on the moon were brought about by the crash-

after the jungle invasion.

ing of smaller moons, the forth. Hitler had read in natural sciences, but here as he was educated at all. of allowing himself to be led, in one instance, to the world-ice theory, which neer Hanns Hörbiger, a colleague, attempted to propagate knowledge of the subject was an absolutely untenable was not taken seriously by this abstruse theory to the around the year 10,000 B. moon, and the possibility of point thrust the moon into

The area of natural science's greatest impact on his philosophy was biology. It is field with any particular science Gregor Mendel's laws of heredity to be generally recognized, and was oblivious to the twentieth century research in the sophistication of the earlier Charles Darwin, whose teaching in which, by the end of the mon knowledge. What this Darwin's biological insight of government and statecraft politics of the strong against the weak, and the struggle for existence, since the beginning of time?

Aside from this doctrine of existence," Hitler also liked the principle of "selective sexual breeding."

dicine and Natural Science;

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his personal physician, Dr. von Has- edge in the medical field was above he was regularly informed about the icated literature on it. Nevertheless, he his judgment against that of the pro- to influence his decisions. He asked for [for the doctor's decisions] and wanted ly as possible the way in which the ork. It was entirely in accord with this al questions that he ridiculed nostrums, mphs of scientific medicine [such as] reventing smallpox epidemics through- spects, he harbored prejudices which mple, the erroneous opinion that the / vegetarian, and that it consequently arian nourishment than with a mixed

stemmed largely, of course, from his f a question disturbed him, he referred ks which stood at his disposal, as for with jaundice during the summer of h the layman normally relies on the tions. He regarded cancer as he once he result of a sustained poisoning of bly caused by improper nourishment. onomy and passed on the impressions om reading as irrefutable statements on were brought about by the crash-

ing of smaller moons, there were other inhabited planets, and so forth. Hitler had read much to extend his knowledge in other natural sciences, but here he also remained self-educated insofar as he was educated at all. Even in this area he scorned the thought of allowing himself to be informed by recognized authorities. This led, in one instance, to his being taken in by the Welteislehre, the world-ice theory, which had originated with the Austrian engi- neer Hanns Hörbiger, a conception which the SA, following Hitler's lead, attempted to propagate. Though anyone with a working knowledge of the subject could have pointed out that the theory was an absolutely untenable fantasy dreamed up by a man who was not taken seriously by responsible scholars, Hitler went on from this abstruse theory to the most unlikely speculations. Perhaps around the year 10,000 B.C. the earth had been rammed by the moon, and the possibility could not be ruled out that the earth at that point thrust the moon into its present orbit.

The area of natural science which interested him most and had the greatest impact on his philosophy of life and consequently also his politics was biology. It is difficult to identify his thinking in this field with any particular school of thought. His ideas were based on Gregor Mendel's laws of heredity, which by about 1900 had come to be generally recognized, but he thought of them in rigid terms and was oblivious to the fact that since the beginning of the twen- tieth century research in mutation had led to alterations in and a sophistication of the earlier theory. Hitler's other touchstone was Charles Darwin, whose teaching he applied in the vulgarized form in which, by the end of the nineteenth century, it had become com- mon knowledge. What this amounted to was "Social Darwinism": Darwin's biological insight cited as the rationalization for a theory of government and statecraft which attempted to justify the power politics of the strong against the weak. How could the smaller na- tions complain about being overpowered by the larger ones, con- sidering that precisely the same thing had been going on in nature since the beginning of time?

Aside from this doctrine of "natural selection in the struggle for existence," Hitler also liked to avail himself of the biological prin- ciple of "selective sexual breeding," according to which the female's

aversion.

1944

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around his Reich, that victory was strictly a matter of will power. "The objection that there can be moments when technical equipment is decisive is utterly invalid," he affirmed in December 1944.¹⁸⁰

Of 1914-1918 he maintained: "The power which disabled us then . . . was a Jewish one."¹⁸¹ By his accounting, the Jews had undermined Germany's war effort by spreading antinational, pacifistic, and defeatist propaganda, by fomenting industrial shirking and strikes, and by financial manipulations and depredations. "The Jewish revolution of 1918"¹⁸² was only the dastardly death-blow. "Not the Revolution, but the systematic demoralization of the people, was to blame for our losing the war. . . . But the Revolution was to blame for our signing that shameful peace."¹⁸³ His first programmatic message was that to liquidate Jewry, its accomplices, and its instruments for sapping the strength of nations, namely Marxism, liberal democracy, and finance capitalism, was necessary and sufficient for Germany's recovery—and urgent. "Poison is completely eating our people away," he declaimed.¹⁸⁴ "The abscess on the body of our people must be lanced," he editorialized.¹⁸⁵ "Marxism has been able to eat deep into the national body like a pestilence," he told an interviewer.¹⁸⁶ Sententiously he called himself and his followers "servants of the German people fighting for the future of our German people against the mortal enemies of our people, against the Jewish blood- and race-poisoning."¹⁸⁷ More laconically he stipulated: "The fight is with the Jewish race alone."¹⁸⁸ The first need was internal. The Jew and not the Entente, he insisted, was "Germany's gravedigger."¹⁸⁹ His lone refusal to join in the national front against the Franco-Belgian occupation of the Ruhr in 1923 exemplified his political posture. His slogan then was: "Not down with France! but down with the November criminals!"¹⁹⁰ His reasoning then as ever was: "What we long for outwardly can be won only through prior inner cleansing."¹⁹¹ His conclusion was an attempt to reverse the November revolution on its fifth anniversary: his Putsch.

Quasi-magical like his doctrine of the will was his suggestion that Germany's defeat would be nullified if only its cause, the Jews, were removed. But sometimes he more nearly claimed

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his mother dying in Linz. His own gassing of 1918 was the referent for his Euthanasia gassings; he was, by the terms of Forster's diagnosis, the original mental patient; the consideration of saving scarce medical resources for the war wounded was Forster's toward him (it did not yet figure with him in 1935). More, his precursive little victim, a blind mental defective, was a dream-style manikin of himself at Pasewalk.²⁷⁹ Yet even at the planning stage of the program he meant the "mercy killings" for his mother, given his dual, vicarious exclusion of himself and, initially, Bloch (of the mental casualties of the war and, initially, Jews). Euthanasia was thus like a last defense, psychologically speaking, against that further program it led into after all—against that "final aim." Through this climactically ghastly finale, Hitler repeated his mother's terminal treatment—applied it to Germany, that is—while also taking it out on Bloch alias the Jew. That was the ultimate meaning of his advance billing of his politics as a desperate eleventh-hour treatment of a dying Germany.²⁸⁰ Once again the treatment helped ensure that the patient would perish, for the mass executions in Russia fired resistance there,²⁸¹ and the exterminations that followed for the rest of German-controlled Europe deflected crucially needed manpower, materials, and transportation from the German war effort.²⁸² Actually these exterminations outside Russia were undertaken only after Hitler had acknowledged in closed councils (after the Russian counteroffensive outside Moscow and the Japanese plunge against America in early December 1941) that his war was unwinnable.²⁸³ Thereafter the losing war covered the removal of Jewry, originally proposed as a means to victory.²⁸⁴ At the same time Hitler took to remarking that for Germany the wages of defeat was death, and increasingly with the addendum that those wages were well earned.²⁸⁵ "Get one thing straight, Schellenberg," he snarled at the SS counterintelligence chief in mid-1944, "in this war there is only . . . victory or ruin. Should the German people fail, it will go to ruin." And after a pause: "Yes, then it should go to ruin, then it should perish."²⁸⁶ In the end he issued scorched-earth orders designed to make sure it would perish²⁸⁷ (they went largely unheeded). Here was the

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nether side of that positive thinking he managed in *extremis*, the hate hitherto buried beneath his consuming love for a mother who had unfitted him to outgrow that consuming love for her.

Hitler's politics was his anti-Semitism—exclusively until his Putsch of November 1923 and still decisively thereafter. His anti-Semitism was his reaction against his guilt for his mother's agony of 1907 following Bloch's ministrations that he prompted. That reaction, long repressed, was released by a gas poisoning reminiscent of his mother's agony—a reminder of traumatic intensity that impelled him to relive the unassimilated experience behind it. Such traumatic reliving involves patterned revisions of the original experience—reversals, and tendencies both to undo the outcome and to carry it to its final consequences.²⁸⁸ Poisoning the poisoner was a reversal; to undo mother Germany's demise was Hitler's ostensible aim; the culprits of 1907 both came to grief the second time around. But these revisions were subordinate to Hitler's straight reliving through his dire false cure for Germany's supposed mortal ailment. That reliving was no less straight for his assuming Bloch's old role on top of his own, beginning with the "operation" he ordered in 1938 "to cleanse the German world of the Jewish poison."²⁸⁹ It was no less straight either for bearing Forster's impress in Hitler's insistence that Germany's seemingly physical incapacitation could be overcome by will power, and perhaps also in Hitler's use of hypnotic techniques with the national patient.

Where Forster had given him a new lease on life, Hitler in turn could only renew an old one for Germany. This renewal will be considered next.

*Same - the force is which
Hitler is hypnotized by Forster.
the Anger, beauty & intensity
of Forster.*

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enforced, and elaborated his racial values,⁷⁹ was his principal vehicle of lawlessness. Its functions were relatively confined before the Polish and especially the Russian war, so long as his anti-Jewish action was still public and most of Europe was still beyond his reach. They broadened enormously thereafter even as the SS was—"more or less conspicuously to the top echelons of the military, the administration, and the diplomatic corps—pushed to the mid-point of the Nazi system now directed to continental rule."⁸⁰ Yet with Himmler himself, not to mention Himmler's henchmen, ideology yielded to expediency in the end. The equation of Bolshevism with Jewry had come apart for Himmler by April 1944, when he angled to contact "world Jewry" for an exchange of Hungarian Jews slated for extermination against trucks to be used solely against the Red Army. He was obscurely seeking acceptance by the western Allies as Hitler's prospective successor who would fight Bolshevism with world Jewry's support.⁸¹ In September 1944 he shut down the last extermination camps behind Hitler's back before their grim job was finished.⁸² On the night of 20 April 1945 he went from Hitler's last birthday party to meet a representative of the World Jewish Congress invited from Sweden and propose "to bury the hatchet" between Nazis and Jews.⁸³

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Hitler for his part put his Jewish politics above his power politics ever more outspokenly once Barbarossa was launched.⁸⁴ His old means-end formula survived only with the means term enlarged to enclose the whole. As of 1942 he maintained that eliminating Judeo-Bolshevism from Germany had been, besides a precondition, a rehearsal for the present war for living space, since then already the enemy had been the same. "Thus we are now waging a fight that had its prelude in the harsh internal showdown that could leave only a single surviving force to unite the entire German people. And we are waging this fight outwardly now with the same object again."⁸⁵ He hinted at a new rhetorical integration of the two terms of his politics in his address of 28 December 1944 to a group of division commanders. "Such struggles as are being fought out in our time," he declared, "are inherently ideological" and in this regard unlike

* a scene w Schellenberg
and Kersten

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vember 1918 over and again in ever new variants on the order of "No capitulation outside, no revolution inside,"⁹⁹ or "A different country stands behind the front and a different front stands before the country."¹⁰⁰ He was as shrill as ever about it when he cried to a gathering of munitions workers a few weeks after the Anglo-American landing of 6 June 1944 in Normandy: "It will never come to a 1918! Never! So long as I live and so long as one of my guards lives, whoever so much as thinks that will be destroyed. . . . A ninth of November will never be repeated in German history. And because a ninth of November will not come again, we shall win this war."¹⁰¹

The bomb blast in his East Prussian headquarters that 20 July perturbed the refrain. Over the radio that night he styled the feckless conspirators behind the blast "a tiny group that believed it could deliver the stab in the back now as in 1918."¹⁰² But at a military conference eleven days later he called their act "a symptom of an inner systemic disturbance, of an inner blood poisoning, that has taken place in us" and fulminated against "that outfit that kept spreading poison," that "damned little clique" of "absolute destroyers and traitors" occupying "the most important positions in the rear." Probably they were to blame for all of Germany's military reverses in the east, he ex-
claimed. Then he added incoherently: "But even if that did not prove to be concretely so, it would be quite enough that people are sitting here in the most decisive place who instead of continually exuding strength and spreading confidence and above all else deepening the absolute awareness of the fatefulness of this struggle—a fateful struggle that can't somehow be broken off or traded away by some clever political or tactical stunt, but that it really is a sort of battle of the Huns in which either you stand or you fall and die, one of the two. If these thoughts are not present in the higher echelons, but instead these idiots imagine that their situation would improve because today the revolution is being made by generals instead of by soldiers as in 1918, then simply everything just comes to an end, then an army must be gradually decomposed from the top down . . . betrayal . . . ongoing betrayal . . . traitors . . . traitors. . . ."¹⁰³ Another military confer-

July 21
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ence a month later found him still castigating rear-line officers for infecting front-line officers with defeatism.¹⁰⁴ But the July bomb blast was again just a failed dagger thrust in his proclamation for the next anniversary of the November revolution.¹⁰⁵ And for front-line commanders in his Ardennes offensive of December 1944 he drummed up his old motif intact: "Today the entire German people stands unshakable and will stand unshakable. In 1918 the German people capitulated without any need."¹⁰⁶ That New Year's Day he assured both army and nation that, since he had mercilessly purged them both after 20 July, the byword of no defeat without or within was more valid than ever.¹⁰⁷ On 30 January, in his last radio address, he ruled out a new capitulation, declaring: "History does not repeat itself!"¹⁰⁸ As late as 11 March 1945 he was still proclaiming: "1918 will not be repeated."¹⁰⁹

Eight days later he ordered Germany destroyed in the wake of its retreating armies.¹¹⁰ In his political testament he claimed that "our resistance is gradually being sapped by creatures as deluded as they are unprincipled,"¹¹¹ and in his addendum to it that "disloyalty and treachery had undermined the force of resistance during the entire war. It had therefore not been granted to him to lead his people to victory."¹¹² This hollow updating of the legendary defeat from within perfected his full-scale refutation of it. This time around, moreover, the defeat was driven home, and the collapse of the established order was unmistakably its result.

"No new November 1918" was like a motto for Hitler's entire approach to World War II. His program for the new war turned on precautions against the old one being repeated: proceeding against the old adversaries by stages (continental, hemispheric, global), successive localized blitzkriegs in the first stage, Britain's advance acquiescence in the continental conquest. And he promoted his Jewish policy as a precaution against the internal poisoning he blamed for the old defeat. Those were respectively two kinds of precaution he took against renewing the 1918 defeat: ineffective preventions of true causes of that defeat and effective preventions of false causes of it. Under the latter head,

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* a scene where lists of names
are checked off. Hitler's pleasure
was taken as opposed to the Polunsky

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thousand years!"¹¹⁴ With every new move abroad thereafter he worsened his chances of ever falling back on a negotiated European settlement even as he lengthened his record of damage and deceit.¹¹⁵ In this he achieved the cumulative effect that Wilson had cited in October 1918 in declaring it impossible to negotiate peace with the then "masters of German policy."¹¹⁶ He himself drew the connection in asserting, on New Year's Day of 1940, that "the Jewish-capitalist world enemy" (the Jewish-Bolshevik world enemy was his ally just then) "knows only one aim, which is to destroy Germany, the German people," but had professed to pursue another, "the removal of my person—that is, the extermination of National Socialism"—until it emerged "that after the experience of 1918 the German people simply no longer falls for this stupidest swindle."¹¹⁷ He downright intended the extermination of the Jews to cut off his approach to the West. To the Rumanian chief of state, in April 1943, he put it (to quote his interpreter's record) that "the more radically one proceeds against the Jews the better. He . . . prefers to burn all his bridges behind him, as Jewish hate is gigantic in any case."¹¹⁸ And to the Bulgarian council of regency in March 1944: "He believes that one should cut off all possible lines of retreat oneself: then one fights with greater ease and resolve."¹¹⁹ He made a virtue of ruling out negotiations even when in full military retreat. In the early summer of 1944, some weeks after the Anglo-American landing in Normandy, he assured armament workers: "I would not think of some rotten compromise or other."¹²⁰ In private councils later that summer he called it "just plain naïve" to imagine that Germany could come to terms with either England or Russia against the other, let alone play them off against each other.¹²¹ His interpreter observed that, while he consistently rejected suggestions from foreign visitors for extending peace feelers either way, in Stalin's case "this rejection was expressed with none of the same wild, indeed almost fanatical, vehemence as in the case of the 'plutocrats.'"¹²² His last recorded refusal to try making a deal with the "plutocrats" was the incongruously worded one of the night of 20–21 April 1945: "I am done making deals."¹²³ His concern to obviate a new Judeo-capitalist swindle

July 1944

THE MEANING OF HITLER 5

peace treaty. The poet Stefan George voiced a widespread mood when, in 1921, he prophesied an age which

Brings forth the one who helps, the Man

and at the same time mapped out his tasks for him:

*He bursts the chains, restores on fields of rubble
His order, scourges those who've gone astray
Back to eternal justice, where the great
Is great again, and master once more master,
Obedience reigns, and on the people's banner
Pins the true sign and through wild storm and terror
Of the red dawn he leads his faithful band
To the day's deed - the New Reich's planting.*

Almost tailor-made for Hitler! Even the 'true sign', the swastika, had (admittedly without anti-semitic overtones) been adorning Stefan George's books for several decades. Indeed an earlier verse of George, dating back to 1907, also seems like an early vision of Hitler:

*The man! The deed! Thus pine both people and High Council.
Do not expect one who dined at your tables!
Perhaps one who for years sat among your murderers,
Slept in your cells, will rise and do the deed.**

* Stefan George (1868-1933), an important poet (though scarcely read today) and founder of a Men's League, emerges in many parts of his later writings, since 1907, as the prophet of the Third Reich. It is significant that he did not like the Third Reich at all when it eventually arrived. He escaped the great official tributes planned for his sixty-fifth birthday on 12 July 1933, by emigrating to Switzerland, where he died the same year. One of the members of the George circle and one of the last disciples of the ageing poet was Count Claus Stauffenberg who performed the attempt on Hitler's life on 20 July 1944 and paid for it with his life. Originally he had enthusiastically hailed Hitler's seizure of power. The chapter of German intellectual history entitled 'George - Hitler - Stauffenberg' still remains to be written.

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Hitler Orders the Holocaust

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tainly not prior to the spring of 1941. Until that date, with the exception of the killings during the invasion of Poland in 1939, all officials in charge of the Jewish question, from Göring and Himmler to Heydrich and Eichmann, were fully involved in emigration, evacuation, or deportation, and there is no evidence that any one of them proposed or envisaged a different procedure. On the other hand, there is a great deal of evidence that at least some of them were shocked or even appalled when the final solution went into effect. To be sure, they did not disagree with it. But they agreed only reluctantly, referring time and again to an order given by Hitler. This is a strong indication that the idea did not originate with them.

In his secret speeches in 1943 and 1944 Himmler lamented many times that this order had been a burden for him, the hardest challenge of his life, or even the most dreadful task, the most dreadful order that could be assigned to an organization.⁶⁰ When Goebbels learned of Globocnik's action in the death camp of Belzec near Lublin, where mass killings in gas chambers had begun shortly after March 16, 1942, Goebbels wrote in his diary on March 27 that the procedure was barbarous, that Hitler's prophecy was coming true in the most dreadful manner, and that "the führer is the unrelenting protagonist and advocate of a radical solution."⁶¹ Rosenberg, apparently after having been briefed by Hitler on the same question, noted in his diary on April 2, 1941, the stunted sentence: "What I do not want to write down today but will never forget."⁶²

Before producing further evidence that Hitler was the prime and only instigator of the Holocaust, I shall briefly return to the killings in Poland in 1939. Again there is no evidence that they were proposed or initiated locally or by subordinate agencies. On the contrary, in a note of July 2, 1940, Heydrich described them as a political operation carried out by Himmler according to instructions (*Weisungen*) from Hitler, and he mentioned the term order (*Befehl*) twice.⁶³

* Obromowicz's signature

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-

'36 '37 '40 '42 ('44')

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

Dec 1923

1944

Secret Societies

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Antichrist) came for Eckart when Hitler declared Providence had spared him from death in World War I so he might claim the Holy Lance to fulfill a world historic destiny.²⁰

The most outlandish claims linking Hitler, Eckart, and the Thulists come, as usual, from Ravenscroft: Eckart's final deed before he died in December 1923 was to initiate Hitler "in a monstrous sadistic magic ritual" similar to the rituals performed by Landulf II at Kalot Enbolot in the ninth century. * A description of the ritual under the direction of Eckart and amid participating members of the innermost circle of the Thulists would be "barely comprehensible, let alone credible without some knowledge of the history and practices of ritual magic."²¹

The atrocities which formed part of the ritual were indescribably sadistic and ghastly: many times more horrible than the treatment given those who attempted to murder Hitler.²² (These would-be assassins of Hitler were slowly strangled by piano wires suspended from butcher's hooks in a Berlin abattoir.) Here is where King parts company with Ravenscroft's attempts to link Hitler inextricably with the so-called inner workings of the Thule Society. King says Ravenscroft does not describe the "monstrous sadistic magic ritual" not because he found it "indescribably sadistic and ghastly" but because there is no evidence whatsoever that any such ritual ever took place—an even better reason for Ravenscroft's silence.²³ King also casts doubts on Eckart's membership in the Thule Society as such by saying it would seem he was never actually a formal member.²⁴ And further doubts about Hitler being a member of the society arise from Schwaab's findings. He concludes that not only was Hitler never a member, he actually kept his distance from the organization.²⁵

*Described by Ravenscroft as "the most evil figure of the 9th Century," Landulf II of Capua was named as "Third Man in the Kingdom" by the emperor Louis II. He ruled a territory which stretched from Naples to Calabria. Through his Islamic connections he was able to maintain a castle eyrie in Arab-occupied Sicily called Kalot Enbolot (or Carla Belota) where he carried out horrific and perverse practices which earned him the reputation as the most feared black magician in the world and eventual excommunication in A.D. 875.

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s. The largest of these were the four large gas chambers capable of a rate of extermination of the others like Treblinka. I observed in concentration camps from May 1940 to December 1941. In his affidavit he says:

When the invasion of Russia began Hitler and Himmler recruited four special units known as Einsatzkommandos to carry out the extermination of the Jewish population and also of Communist functionaries. Otto Ohlendorff, the Chief of the Security Police (SD), who commanded Einsatzgruppe D in southern Russia for a year, estimated that 90,000 men, women, and children were liquidated by his formation during that period. At first the victims were made to dig mass trenches into which they were thrown after execution by shooting. In the spring of 1942, however, the efficient Main

Sept 1943

Jan 1944

War-Lord, 1939-45

up in the Abruzzi Mountains. Hitler took a close personal interest in Mussolini's movements, and once he had been located a spectacular rescue from the air was planned. On 12 September this was carried out with success by an S.S. detachment under the command of Otto Skorzeny, and Mussolini was brought to the Führer's Headquarters at Rastenburg.

The first meeting between the two men was cordial, but a rapid disenchantment followed. Hitler's plan was to re-establish the Fascist régime in Italy, and to be successful, it must have Mussolini at its head. The Duce, however, was now a shrunken figure, an ageing man without political ambition, whose real wish was to be allowed to go home to the Romagna. Under Hitler's urging—and scarcely veiled threats—he agreed to play the part for which he had been cast, but it was without enthusiasm and, as it soon appeared, only with the help of vigorous prompting from the producer.

On 15 September Mussolini's restoration to the leadership of Fascism was proclaimed, and the new Italian Social Republic came into being. Its 'Government' followed a squalid and undistinguished career until the end of the war in Italy. Even when Mussolini returned to Italy, his villa was surrounded by S.S. Guards, ostensibly as a bodyguard. The new régime possessed neither independence nor authority: it was despised by the Germans and hated by the Italians.

The last phase of Mussolini's life was the most degrading of all. He was reduced to the rank of a puppet dictator, and Hitler exacted the full humiliation. In January 1944 Ciano was shot by a Fascist firing squad acting under the nominal authority of his father-in-law. The fascination which Hitler had once exerted over Mussolini was turned to hatred. But the Duce could not escape from the destiny he had forged for himself in making his pact with Hitler and, when the end came, his body was hung up on a gibbet in

Two Julys, 1943-4

that same city of Milan in the Axis on 1 November 1

Hitler's conviction that in Italy proved as insu Mussolini as a brother blows of Fate. But the It: his purpose: it enabled a: at least for a time. Taken in occupying the greater p Allies well south of Rom solini could be presented the crisis which had th: leave the southern frontie posed to Allied attack.

Moreover, the Germans zones of occupation in th Albania, and Greece, wher been apprehensive of a B: the course of events in t since El Alamein and th Africa fourteen months congratulate himself at th tive way in which, by e: luck, he had retrieved a di:

Even so, the position in s ing in 1943. However slo: vance, all that Kesselring skilful rearguard action. T still darker.

In the east, after throw March 1943, in July the offensive against their li: million men, the finest tr Army, including seventeen with the new heavy Tiger it out. After heavy and co: not only succeeded in bri: to a halt, but on 12 July th sive farther north. Gradu:

July 1944

War-Lord, 1939-45

would brace his foot against some object and hold his left hand with his right. At the same time he began to drag his left foot, as though he were lame.

To meet the demands which he made upon himself between 1930 and 1943 Hitler must have had an iron constitution. He was inclined to fuss about his health, believing that he had a weak heart and complaining of pains in his stomach and occasional bouts of giddiness. But his doctors found nothing wrong with his heart or his stomach, and until 1943 he actually suffered very little from ill-health.

Under the stress of war, however, Hitler began to take increasing quantities of drugs to stimulate his flagging energies. Since 1936 he had kept as his personal physician in constant attendance on him a Professor Morell, a quack doctor who had once practised as a specialist in venereal disease in Berlin. Morell won Hitler's confidence by curing him of eczema of the leg, and used his position to make a fortune by manufacturing patent medicines under the Führer's patronage. He is described by H. R. Trevor-Roper after the war as 'a gross but deflated old man, of cringing manners, inarticulate speech, and the hygienic habits of a pig'. Hitler himself never trusted Morell, trying constantly to trip him up and threatening him with ejection or worse, but his dependence upon him was incontestable. At every meal Hitler took a considerable number of tablets prepared by Morell and had frequent injections as well every day during the last two years of his life.

When Dr. Giesing examined Hitler in July 1944, he found that, to relieve the pains in his stomach, Morell had been giving him for two years at least a drug known as Dr. Koester's Antigas Pills which was compounded of strychnine and belladonna. Giesing believed that Hitler was being slowly poisoned by these pills and that this accounted both for the intensification of the pains and for the progressive discoloration

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of Hitler's skin. The only Hitler was the dismissive supported Giesing, and the visits to the Führer's Headquarters two years of the Third practically all the other kept themselves going on pensed by Dr Morell.

To the strain of responsibility of Morell's ministrations the life Hitler was now leading in 1941 Hitler made his headquarters at Wolfsschanze, in East Prussia. For the air-raids he soon moved to the concrete bunkers embedded in the hillside. The home in a suite of two bare, undecorated concrete rooms with wooden furniture.

The austerity of Hitler's life matched the bleakness of the East. Jodl, who spent much time in the mixture of cloister and camp, there were numerous wire fences. . . . Apart from reports of the very little news from the front, 'the holy of holies.'

The main event of each day was the conference at noon. To describe it actually to misrepresent the series of reports on the many decisions were taken solely by a number of officers were not other commanders or ministers. Each of these officers, his adjutants, who carried on the big centre table, or grams to be presented. As the Eastern Front, Italy, air

War-Lord, 1939-45

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of Hitler's skin. The only result, however, of telling Hitler was the dismissal of his other doctors, who supported Giesing, and the end of Dr. Giesing's own visits to the Führer's Headquarters. During the last two years of the Third Reich, not only Hitler but practically all the other members of his entourage kept themselves going on the drugs obligingly dispensed by Dr Morell.

To the strain of responsibility and the evil effects of Morell's ministrations must be added the effects of the life Hitler was now leading. From the summer of 1941 Hitler made his permanent headquarters at Wolfsschanze, in East Prussia. Under the threat of air-raids he soon moved to one of the massive concrete bunkers embedded in the ground, and made his home in a suite of two or three small rooms with bare, undecorated concrete walls and the simplest wooden furniture.

The austerity of Hitler's life at his headquarters matched the bleakness of the surroundings. General Jodl, who spent much time there, described it as 'a mixture of cloister and concentration camp. There were numerous wire fences and much barbed-wire. . . . Apart from reports on the military situation, very little news from the outer world penetrated this holy of holies.'

The main event of each day was the Führer's Conference at noon. To describe these as conferences is actually to misrepresent their character: they were a series of reports on the military situation, in which decisions were taken solely by the Führer. A certain number of officers were nearly always present, and other commanders or ministers would attend intermittently. Each of these officers was accompanied by his adjutants, who carried the maps to be spread out on the big centre table, or the memoranda and diagrams to be presented. As each report was made—Eastern Front, Italy, air war, and so on—Hitler

would announce his decision, and the officers concerned would leave the room to send off the necessary instructions. There was no general discussion of the situation as a whole: only the Führer was allowed to concern himself with the over-all picture. Another more restricted military conference sometimes followed late in the evening, and there were frequent private meetings between Hitler and his chief lieutenants, Himmler, Bormann, the powerful head of the Party Chancery, or Goebbels on a flying visit from Berlin.

Hitler's day was almost entirely taken up with meetings of this kind. He rose late, breakfasted alone, and after the noon conference took lunch at any time between 2 and 5 p.m. Usually he rested in the late afternoon, resuming his talks at six or seven o'clock. Dinner might be served at any time between 8 p.m. and midnight. There followed further discussions and his day ended with tea in the company of his secretaries at four o'clock in the morning.

Apart from a short walk with his Alsatian bitch, Blondi, which had been given him by Bormann to raise his spirits after Stalingrad and to which he became very attached, Hitler took no exercise and enjoyed no form of relaxation. As the war went on he dropped the habit of seeing films after dinner, apart from newsreels. Up to the time of Stalingrad, he sometimes spent an evening listening to gramophone records, Beethoven, Wagner, or Wolf's *Lieder*. After Stalingrad however, he would hear no more music, and his sole occupation as they drank their tea in the early hours of the morning was to recall the past, his youth in Vienna and the years of struggle. This was interspersed with reflections on history, on the destiny of man, religion, and other large subjects. Soon, his secretary complains, his remarks became as familiar as the records; they knew exactly what he would say and kept awake only with the

greatest difficulty. On no thing connected with it p cussion.

The dominant impressi life at the Führer's Head one of intense boredom, ment of crises like that and by Hitler's unpred usually directed against tl even of Eva Braun, who berg. So long as Hitler re Goebbels thought that Blk any human being.

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greatest difficulty. On no account was the war or anything connected with it permitted as a subject of discussion.

The dominant impression derived from accounts of life at the Führer's Headquarters in 1943 and 1944 is one of intense boredom, punctuated by the excitement of crises like that caused by Mussolini's fall and by Hitler's unpredictable outbursts of rage, usually directed against the generals. Hitler saw little even of Eva Braun, who remained on the Obersalzberg. So long as Hitler remained at his headquarters, Goebbels thought that Blondi was closer to him than any human being.

Hitler's ostensible reason for shutting himself up in this way was the demands made on him by the war. But there was a deeper psychological compulsion at work. Here he lived in a private world of his own, from which the ugly and awkward facts of Germany's situation were excluded. He refused to visit any of the bombed towns, just as he refused to read reports which contradicted the picture he wanted to form. The power of Martin Bormann, Hitler's personal secretary, was built up on the skill with which he pandered to this weakness, carefully keeping back unpleasant information and defeating the attempts of those who tried to make Hitler aware of the gravity of the situation.

In the last years of his life Hitler deliberately refused to exercise the extraordinary powers he had once displayed as a mass-orator. Goebbels did everything he could to overcome the Führer's reluctance. Hitler's excuse was always the same: he was waiting for a military success. But again one may suspect a deeper reason. Hitler's gifts as an orator had always depended on his flair for sensing what was in the minds of his audience. He no longer wanted to know what was in the minds of the German people; at all costs he must preserve his illusions. Until he could

force events to conform to the pattern he sought to impose, he hid himself away in his headquarters.

As the Allied armies began to press in on Germany in the course of 1944, some of the Nazi leaders began to look around for ways to disappear or make private deals with the enemy. This, if inglorious, may be regarded as a normal human reaction to such a situation. Hitler's was wholly different. He was fighting for something more than his power or his skin; he was fighting to preserve intact that image he had created of himself as one of Hegel's 'world-historical individuals'. The unforgivable sin was to fail, as Mussolini had failed, to rise to the measure of events. Hitler's faith was crystallized in the belief that if only he could survive the buffetings of the waves which were breaking over him he would be saved by some miraculous intervention and still triumph over his enemies. Everything depended upon the will to hold out.

This belief in turn depended upon the fundamental belief which he never abandoned to the end of his life—that he was a man chosen by Providence to act as the agent of the 'world-historical process'. Every incident in his life was used to support the truth of this assertion: the number of times he had escaped attempts at assassination, or the fact that the Russians had not broken through in the winter of 1941-2. Anything, however trivial, which went right in the last two years of the war served Hitler as further evidence that he had only to trust in Providence and all would be well.

There were other, more material factors on which Hitler based his hopes of a dramatic reversal of the war in his favour. In his speech of 8 November 1942, he referred to the new secret weapons which Germany was building and promised the Allies an answer to their bombing raids 'which will strike them dumb'. The weapons he had in mind were the V1, the flying

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bomb, and the V2, the new jet fighter-plane, was to sweep the air types of U-boats, with Allies' supply lines.

The secret weapon and V2 were to play a part in the war, but the hopes placed upon them were placed upon the most insuperable difficulty: the Allied air-attacks miraculously to transfer the resources of the Allies to the Allies' supply lines, and to answer to every objection the most derest foundation, and at least as they figured in the realm of fact.

More substantial, it is a set of hopes which the partners in the Grand Alliance at German anti-Bolshevik era of the Cold War, and the aptness of much of the

Subsequent events have been the basis of the wartime Powers and the U.S.S.R. constantly repeating the threat to European civilization and hint of friction between well as Ribbentrop urged diplomatic action to split the week of his life Hitler expected that the Allies were certain most extravagant hopes which he kept alive in the rumouring that negotiations through a third party, or

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1 in mind were the V1, the flying

bomb, and the V2, the rocket. To these must be added
the new jet fighter-planes, with which the Luftwaffe
was to sweep the enemy from the skies, and new
types of U-boats, with which the Navy was to cut the
Allies' supply lines.

The secret weapons actually existed, and the V1
and V2 were to play some part in the final stages of
the war, but the hopes which Hitler and Goebbels
placed upon them were exaggerated. Ignoring the al-
most insuperable difficulties of mass-production under
the Allied air-attacks, they expected the weapons
miraculously to transform the strategic situation, and
set at naught rational calculations of manpower, eco-
nomic resources, and military strength. This hope to
which Hitler clung until the very end, his unfailing
answer to every objection, was built upon the slen-
derest foundation, and the secret weapons, too—at
least as they figured in Hitler's mind—soon belonged
more to the realm of fantasy than that of fact.

More substantial, it may now appear, was the par-
allel set of hopes which he built up of a split between
the partners in the Grand Alliance. No one, looking
back at German anti-Bolshevik propaganda from the
era of the Cold War, can fail to be struck by the
aptness of much of the argument.

Subsequent events have shown how precarious was
the basis of the wartime alliance between the Western
Powers and the U.S.S.R. German propaganda, con-
stantly repeating the theme of the Bolshevik threat
to European civilization, was quick to pick on any
hint of friction between the Allies, and Goebbels as
well as Ribbentrop urged Hitler to follow this up with
diplomatic action to split the alliance. Until the last
week of his life Hitler expressed the firm conviction
that the Allies were certain to fall out. He built the
most extravagant hopes on such a quarrel, hopes
which he kept alive in those around him by spread-
ing rumours that negotiations were about to begin
through a third party, or had already begun.

But all these hopes—the secret weapons and the break-up of the Grand Alliance—were subsidiary to the central pillar of Hitler's faith, the belief in himself, in his destiny and consequent ability to master any crisis. It was from this belief alone that he derived the strength of will to continue the war long after it had been lost, and to persuade not only himself, but many of those around him, against the evidence and their own common sense, that all was not yet hopeless. To the 'historic' image of the Führer, Hitler was prepared to sacrifice the German Army, the German nation, and in the end himself. From this course he never deviated: the only question was whether the German Army and the German nation were prepared to let him.

Little in the way of dissuading Hitler, still less of opposing him, could be expected from the other Nazi leaders.

Göring, still Hitler's successor, Reichsmarshal, Commander-in-Chief of the Air Force, Minister for Air, Plenipotentiary for the Four-Year Plan, Chairman of the Council of Ministers for the Defence of the Reich, Minister President of Prussia, President of the Reichstag and holder of a score of other offices, had steadily lost authority since the beginning of the war. In 1933-4 he was unquestionably the second man in Germany; by 1942, sloth, vanity, and his love of luxury had undermined not only his political authority but his native ability. Hitler was tolerant of Göring's weaknesses, but he was not blind to what was happening, and the failure of the Air Force finally discredited the Reichsmarshal in his eyes. There were angry scenes between the two men, Hitler accusing the Luftwaffe of cowardice as well as incompetence, and blaming Göring for letting himself be taken in by the Air Force generals. Some personal feeling for Göring remained until the end, but Hitler

had no longer any confidence out of his way.

The last of the original leaders, was both able and tough propagandist, but his cynical tongue did not make him popular in the early years of the war, towards Goebbels, partly because of his love affairs, partly his malicious wit, but the last the eclipse of Göring, saw Goebbels in favour.

As early as 1942 Goebbels had more drastic mobilization of the German people. This was a clever line to adopt. Responsible positions were lost, won back Hitler's confidence, a few men with whom Hitler could

Goebbels saw well enough. He threatened Germany, and in this way persuaded Hitler to consider. When this came to nothing, he supposed that there was any distance from Hitler, and instead of the Führer he began to out-Hitler Hitler for still more drastic measures. In 1945, proposed that Germany should call the Geneva Convention and shoot the hand, and who persuaded Hitler. His passion for self-dramatization, the idea of fighting on to the last position, and he was the original group who joined the Berlin bunker.

Of those who became prominent after the war, three are worth more than the others, Bormann, and Speer. Hitler died in 1945; in the following ten

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leader of an opposition, and only in the last days of
the collapse was Himmler brought, with the utmost
difficulty, to admit the possibility of acting on his
own initiative to end the war.

The last of the great feudatories of the Nazi Court
to carve out his demesne was Martin Bormann. In
May 1941 Rudolf Hess, Head of the Party Chancery,
took off for Scotland in an unauthorized attempt to
conduct negotiations for peace. Hess's unexpected
flight gave Bormann his chance. Succeeding to Hess's
position, as early as January 1942 he was able to
secure a directive laying down that he alone was to
handle the Party's share in all legislation, jobs for
Party members in the State administration, and all
contacts between the various ministries and the
Party.

This could be made into a powerful position, and
Bormann was indefatigable in working to enlarge his
claims. His agents were the Gauleiters, who were
directly responsible to him. In December 1942, when
all Gaue became Reich Defence Districts, the Gau-
leiters, now Reich Defence Commissioners as well,
gained an effective control over the whole of the
civilian war effort. After Himmler became Minister
of the Interior in 1943 a clash between the two em-
pires of the S.S. and the Party was inevitable. Bor-
mann not only held his own against the powerful
Reichsführer S.S., but by the end of 1944 had gained
a lead in the struggle for power.

While both men controlled powerful organizations,
Bormann grasped the importance of making himself
indispensable to Hitler. In constant attendance on
him, he succeeded in drawing most of the threads of
internal administration into his hands. Hitler, pre-
occupied with the war, was glad enough to be re-
lieved of the burden of administration, and in April
1943 Bormann was officially recognized as Secretary
to the Führer. It was Bormann who decided whom
the Führer should and should not see, what he should

or should not read, it was Bormann who was present at nearly every interview and drafted the Führer's instructions. The importance of this position can scarcely be overestimated, for, as Weizsäcker, the State Secretary in the Foreign Office, says: 'Ministerial skill in the Third Reich consisted in making the most of a favourable hour or minute when Hitler made a decision, this often taking the form of a remark thrown out casually, which then went its way as an "Order of the Führer".'

In this way Bormann, a brutal and much-hated man, acquired immense power. It was a power, however, which he exercised not in his own right, but solely in the name of Hitler. Like his great rival Himmler, once separated from Hitler, Bormann was a political cypher. For all these men the road to power lay through acquiring Hitler's favour, not in risking its loss through opposition, and Bormann's voice, like that of Goebbels, was always raised in advocacy of more extreme measures.

As for the others, Ribbentrop still occupied the post of Foreign Minister, but had ceased to be taken seriously by Hitler or anyone else. Ley, when he was sober, ran anxiously from one group to another, trying to curry favour. The rest were minor figures, gratified by a nod of recognition from the Führer and wholly excluded from any knowledge of major decisions of policy.

Until the last few days of his life when Himmler and Göring made their last-minute attempts to negotiate with the Allies—and were promptly expelled from the Party—Hitler's hold over his Party remained intact. Its leaders were his creatures: had it not been for Hitler not one of them—with the possible exception of Goebbels and Göring—would ever have risen from the obscurity which was their natural environment. Their power was derivative; their light reflected. To turn against Hitler, to question his decisions, would have been to destroy the

thread of hope to which failed, they would fall with common crimes in which they were together. But there was something in Albert Speer: 'They were obedient to him, and with whatever the medical term be. I noticed during my absence in his presence for any tired, exhausted and void. work was paralysed.'

Speer is perhaps the most all, precisely because it is the others. He only came in the spring of 1942, when Hitler as Minister for Armaments in the next two years was responsible for the whole. It was Speer who, in organization, patched up the and factories, and somehow bare minimum of transport which the war on the German to a standstill. Speer was not Hitler was still able to cast he stood apart from the country interested far more in the brought him.

A long illness kept him from Headquarters from February. On his return he became disquieted. Germany was being made to of the war and—more disquieted Hitler was determined to do more than admit defeat.

Speer systematically set about the design, and eventually, early attempt to kill Hitler and thus introducing poison-gas into the

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his life when Himmler st-minute attempts to and were promptly ex- r's hold over his Party were his creatures: had one of them—with the els and Göring—would security which was their power was derivative, against Hitler, to ques- ve been to destroy the

thread of hope to which they still clung. If Hitler failed, they would fall with him. If nothing else, the common crimes in which they had shared bound them together. But there was something more, according to Albert Speer: 'They were all under his spell, blindly obedient to him, and with no will of their own—whatever the medical term for this phenomenon may be. I noticed during my activities as architect, that to be in his presence for any length of time made me tired, exhausted and void. Capacity for independent work was paralysed.'

Speer is perhaps the most interesting case of them all, precisely because it is so different from that of the others. He only came into prominence in the spring of 1942, when Hitler suddenly nominated him as Minister for Armaments Production, but his rise in the next two years was rapid. By August 1944 he was responsible for the whole of German war economy. It was Speer who, by a remarkable feat of organization, patched up the bombed communications and factories, and somehow or other maintained the bare minimum of transport and production without which the war on the German side would have come to a standstill. Speer was not unaffected by the spell Hitler was still able to cast over those near him, but he stood apart from the contest for power; he was interested far more in the job than in the power it brought him.

A long illness kept him away from the Führer's Headquarters from February to June 1944, but on his return he became disquieted at the price which Germany was being made to pay for the prolongation of the war and—more disquieting still—realized that Hitler was determined to destroy Germany rather than admit defeat.

Speer systematically set about frustrating Hitler's design, and eventually, early in 1945, planned an attempt to kill Hitler and the men around him by introducing poison-gas into the ventilation system of

* D.I. It was the last service I could perform for him.

ar-Lord, 1939-45

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them as cowards, forced them to carry out orders they believed to be impossible to execute, and dismissed them when they failed. The generals submitted to treatment such as no previous German ruler had ever dared to inflict on the Army.

Hitler's criticism of the German Officer Corps was directed against its conservatism and its 'negative' attitude towards the National Socialist revolution. In practise, the revolutionary spirit meant willingness to carry out Hitler's orders without hesitation and without regard for the cost. Although he could not continue the war without the generals, those who retained office or secured promotion were the compliant, the ambitious who concealed their doubts, or rough-and-ready soldiers who went up to the front, drove their men to the limit and did not worry their heads too much about the strategic situation.

As the war went on Hitler came to rely more and more on the Waffen S.S. divisions, who were provided with the best equipment, given priority in recruitment and reserved for the most spectacular operations. Towards the end of the war the number of these divisions had risen to more than thirty-five. The growth of this rival S.S. Army was a particular grievance with the Regular Army officers.

After the fall of Mussolini, Hitler congratulated himself upon having no monarchy in Germany which could be used to turn him out of office. The thorough process of Nazification to which he had subjected the institutions of Germany, from the Reichstag to the Law Courts, from the trade unions to the universities, had destroyed, he believed, the basis for an organized opposition. However, two institutions in Germany still retained some independence.

The first was the Churches. Among the most courageous demonstrations of opposition during the war were the sermons preached by the Catholic Bishop of Münster and the Protestant pastor, Dr. Niemöller. Neither the Catholic Church nor the Evangelical

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Stauffenberg, born
distinguished South
man, he served with
Poland, France, and
into the conspiracy
After recovering

early 1944

from wounds in the Tunisian campaign, which cost
him his left eye, right hand, and two fingers of the
other hand, Stauffenberg secured appointment to
Olbricht's staff in Berlin and threw himself into
preparations for a renewed attempt at a *coup d'état*.

Stauffenberg used the pretext of the dangers of a
revolt by the millions of foreign workers in Germany
to prepare plans for the Home Army to take over
emergency powers in Berlin and other German cities.
'Operation Valkyrie' was worked out in detail and
a series of orders and appeals drawn up to be signed
by Beck as the new head of state and Goerdeler as
chancellor.

With the help of men on whom he could rely at the
Führer's headquarters, in Berlin and in the German
Army in the west, Stauffenberg hoped to push the
reluctant Army leaders into action once Hitler had
been killed. Stauffenberg allotted the task of assas-
sination to himself despite the handicap of his in-
juries.

The conspirators were now working against time.
Further arrests were made early in 1944, including
that of Moltke. In February, the greater part of the
Abwehr functions were transferred to a unified In-
telligence Service under Himmler, who told Admiral
Canaris that he knew very well a revolt was being
planned and that he would strike when the moment
came.

The news that the Allies had landed in Normandy
added confusion to the conspirators' plans. In July
there were more arrests, and a warrant was out for
Goerdeler. The plot was now in danger of being
wrecked.

At the end of June Stauffenberg was appointed
Chief of Staff to the Commander-in-Chief of the
Home Army, a position which gave him frequent
access to Hitler. On 11 July he attended a conference
at Berchtesgaden with a time-bomb concealed in his
brief-case, but in the absence of Himmler and Göring

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he decided to wait until there was a better chance of killing all the leaders at one blow. A second chance came on 15 July when he was again summoned to a conference at the Führer's Headquarters in East Prussia. Hitler unexpectedly cut the meeting short, and Stauffenberg did not have time to set off the bomb. Four days later, on 20 July, he flew to East Prussia determined that his third chance should be decisive.

For Hitler the first six months of 1944 had brought nothing but an intensification of all the familiar problems. In January the Russians freed Leningrad from its German besiegers, and by the end of June large sections of the German front ceased to exist. The German divisions Hitler insisted on holding in the Baltic States were threatened with encirclement, while the Russians were already thrusting towards the province of East Prussia, the first German territory to be threatened with invasion.

During the same six months the Allied air forces continued to bomb German towns and communications with monotonous regularity and in March the Americans made their first day raid on Berlin. In Italy Kesselring was forced to retreat, and the Allies entered Rome on 4 June.

Two days later at dawn the British and Americans began the long-awaited assault from the west. In preparation for the invasion, Hitler had recalled Rundstedt to act as Commander-in-Chief in the west. Considerable effort had been expended in building defences along the western coastline of Europe, but the Atlantic Wall was much weaker than German propaganda represented it to be. In June 1944 sixty German divisions were available to hold a front which extended from Holland to the south of France; few were of first-rate quality, and only eleven of them were armoured formations.

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Two Julys, 1948-4

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The actual landing in the early hours of 6 June caught the Germans unawares, and the opportunities of the first few hours were missed. Once the bridgehead had been made good, Hitler refused to give his commanders a free hand, constantly intervened to dictate orders which were out of keeping with the situation at the front, and persisted in believing that the Allies could still be thrown back into the sea. Relations between Hitler and the generals on the spot rapidly became strained, and on 17 June he summoned both Rundstedt and Rommel for a conference at Margival, near Soissons.

The Führer was in a bitter mood. The fact that the Allied landings had succeeded he ascribed to the incompetence of the defence. When Rommel answered with an account of the difficulties of the situation, which were only increased by Hitler's rigid insistence on defending every foot of territory, Hitler went off into a monologue on the subject of the V-weapons which, he declared, would be decisive. Rommel's attempt to make him grasp the seriousness of the German position failed. Hitler talked of 'masses of jet-fighters' which would shatter the Allied air superiority, described the military situation in Italy and on the Russian front as stabilized, and lost himself in a cloud of words prophesying the imminent collapse of Britain under the V-bombs.

Further efforts to make Hitler realize that the

War-Lord, 1939-45

landings had already failed. At the end of June, the main tried to persuade Hitler and in the west and to end the by replacing Rundstedt with G. But Kluge was no more. Rommel to stem the Allied, although he still refused to. Hitler was confronted with as is in the west as in the east. was being made to realize the 'no fronts'.

is Headquarters in East Prussia. A conference was scheduled after which Mussolini was to

from Berlin during the morning to report on the creation of divisions. He brought his portfolio in which he had confided with a device for exploding. The mechanism had been started. Already proceeding when Stauffenberg's twenty-four men were grouped around the oak table on which were spread maps. Neither Himmler nor Göring. Neither himself was standing to one of the long sides of the table to look at Jodl and Jodl on his left. Stauffenberg near Hitler on his right. He was under the table, having started to come in, and then left the room. He had been gone only a minute or so p.m., a loud explosion shattered the walls and the roof, and debris which crashed down on

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In the smoke and confusion, Hitler staggered out of the door on Keitel's arm. One of his trouser legs had been blown off; he was covered in dust, and he had sustained a number of injuries. His hair was scorched, his right arm hung stiff and useless, one of his legs had been burned, a falling beam had bruised his back, and both ear-drums were found to be damaged by the explosion. But he was alive. Those who had been at the end of the table where Stauffenberg placed the brief-case were either dead or badly wounded. Hitler had been protected, partly by the table-top over which he was leaning at the time, and partly by the heavy wooden support on which the table rested and against which Stauffenberg's brief-case had been pushed before the bomb exploded.

Although badly shaken Hitler was curiously calm, and in the early afternoon he appeared on the platform of the Headquarters station to receive Mussolini. Apart from a stiff right arm, he bore no traces of his experience and the account which he gave to Mussolini was marked by its restraint.

As soon as they reached Wolfsschanze Hitler took Mussolini to look at the wrecked conference room. Then, as he began to reenact the scene, his voice became more excited.

'After my miraculous escape from death today I am more than ever convinced that it is my fate to bring our common enterprise to a successful conclusion.' Nodding his head, Mussolini could only agree. 'After what I have seen here, I am absolutely of your opinion. This was a sign from Heaven.'

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upon two conditions, the of Hitler and prompt, de- Stauffenberg, in the con-losion, left the Führer's hat no one in the confer-. The first reports of the ht, however, made it clear , and he therefore decided 'Valkyrie'. When Stauffen-airfield after a three-hour —still believing that Hitler 'suaded Olbricht to start ion. But three to four hours thing still remained to be ove had been made to seize Gestapo headquarters, nor arrest Goebbels.

Orders were hurriedly sent out to the chief army commands to carry out 'Operation Valkyrie', but shortly after 6.30 p.m. the German radio broadcast an announcement, telephoned by Goebbels, that an attempt had been made to kill Hitler but had failed. Once this became known, fear of Hitler's revenge became the dominant motive in the minds of that large number of officers who had hitherto waited to see if the putsch was successful before committing themselves.

Soon after 8 o'clock Keitel sent out a message by teleprinter to all commands directing all commanding officers to ignore orders not counter-signed by himself or by Himmler. An hour later the radio put out an announcement that Hitler would broadcast to the German people before midnight.

The plan to capture Berlin had totally miscarried and the situation of the little group of conspirators was now hopeless. In the course of the evening a group of officers loyal to Hitler, who had been placed under arrest in the Bendlerstrasse earlier in the day, broke out of custody, released General Fromm (whose office as Commander-in-Chief of the Home Army had been taken over by Höppner) and disarmed the conspirators. Fromm's own behaviour had been equivocal and he was now only too anxious to display his zealous devotion by getting rid of those who might incriminate him. When troops arrived to arrest the conspirators, Fromm ordered Stauffenberg, Olbricht, and two other officers to be shot in the courtyard. Beck was allowed the choice of suicide. Fromm was only prevented from executing the rest by the arrival of Kaltenbrunner, Himmler's chief lieutenant, who was far more interested in discovering what could be learned from the survivors than in shooting them out of hand, now that the putsch had failed. Himmler, reaching Berlin from East Prussia in the course of the evening, set up his

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headquarters at Goebbel's house, and the first examinations were carried out that night. The man-hunt had begun.

Only in Paris were the conspirators successful. There they had been able to count on a number of staunch supporters, headed by General Heinrich von Stülpnagel, the Military Governor of France. As soon as he received the code word from Berlin Stülpnagel carried out the orders to arrest the 1,200 S.S. and S.D. men in Paris, and the Army was rapidly in complete command of the situation. But here, too, the conspirators were dogged by the same ill-luck that had pursued them throughout the day.

In the early months of 1944, Field-Marshal Rommel, then recently appointed to a command in the west, had been brought into contact with the group around Beck and Goerdeler. Rommel was a man of action, not much given to reflection, but he needed little convincing at this stage of the war that, if Germany was to be saved, Hitler must be got rid of. Rommel was opposed to an assassination of Hitler, on grounds that they must avoid making a martyr of him. He proposed instead that Hitler should be seized and tried before a German court. He accepted the leadership of Beck and Goerdeler, however; he was willing to take over command of the Army or Armed Forces—his popularity would have been a considerable asset—and he proposed to initiate armistice negotiations with General Eisenhower on his own authority.

On 17 July, however, while Rommel was returning from the front, his car was attacked by British fighters and the Field-Marshal was severely injured. Thus, on 20 July, Rommel was lying unconscious in hospital, and his command was in the hands of Field-Marshal von Kluge, a horse of another colour.

Kluge had been approached by the conspirators as long ago as 1942, and he knew of Rommel's feelings,

but when the attempt on I refused to consider taking it west. Without the support field, Stülpnagel could do no opportunity which there was by dawn on the 21st, the Paris as well as in Berlin, moved home to report. Now act, and his revenge was

Half an hour after midnight July all German radio stations but still recognizable voice from East Prussia. 'If I speak, it is first in order that and should know that I am secondly that you should be killed in German history. A vicious, irresponsible, and at and stupid officers had formed and the High Command of This time we shall get even which we National Socialists

Hitler's threats were rare was moved by a passion of No complete figure can be those executed after 20 July been accepted as the best of Many thousands of others were camps. The investigations Gestapo and S.D. went on in the last days of the war.

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but when the attempt on Hitler's life failed, he re-
fused to consider taking independent action in the
west. Without the support of the commander in the
field, Stülpnagel could do nothing: he had created an
opportunity which there was no one to exploit. So,
by dawn on the 21st, the putsch had collapsed in
Paris as well as in Berlin, and Stülpnagel was sum-
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from East Prussia. 'If I speak to you today', he be-
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This time we shall get even with them in the way to
which we National Socialists are accustomed.

Hitler's threats were rarely idle, and this time he
was moved by a passion of personal vindictiveness.
No complete figure can be given for the number of
those executed after 20 July: a total of 4,980 has
been accepted as the best estimate that can be made.
Many thousands of others were sent to concentration
camps. The investigations and executions of the
Gestapo and S.D. went on without interruption until
the last days of the war.

Hitler and Himmler also used the opportunity to
imprison or kill many who had only the flimsiest
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lected to rouse Hitler's suspicions of Rommel. After

July 1944

War-Lord, 1939-45

a slow recovery from his injuries, in October, Rommel received a brief message from the Führer offering him the choice between suicide and trial before the People's Court. For the sake of his family, Rommel chose the former. The cause of his death was announced as heart failure, due to the effects of his accident, and the Führer accorded him a State funeral. Hitler was not prepared to admit that the most popular general of the war had turned against him: 'His heart' declared the funeral oration, which Rundstedt was called upon to read, 'belonged to the Führer.'

It was against the Officer Corps that Hitler's resentment was most sharply directed. To defeatism, cowardice, and conservatism the generals had now added the crime of treason. Had Hitler been free to give full rein to his anger, he would have made a clean sweep and imprisoned or shot every general within sight. But in the middle of a grave military crisis this was more than he could afford to do. Nor would his own prestige allow him to admit that the Army no longer had complete faith in his leadership. In public, therefore, elaborate measures were taken to conceal the split between the Army and its commander-in-chief. In his broadcast of 20-21 July Hitler insisted that only a small clique of officers was involved. Goebbels described the plot as a stab in the back aimed at the fighting front and crushed by the Army itself.

But in fact the humiliation of the Army was complete. The generals had now to accept the Waffen S.S. as equal partners with the Army, Navy, and Air Force. On 24 July the Nazi salute was made compulsory 'as a sign of the Army's unshakable allegiance to the Führer and of the closest unity between Army and Party.' On the 29th General Guderian issued a further order which insisted that henceforth every General Staff Officer must actively

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cooperate in the indoctrination of National Socialist belief. Political Officers were now in the headquarters.

Despite the measures taken despite the purge of the staff, the attempt, Hitler's distrust of the staff, forward unconcealed. The desperate effort which Hitler made the enemy outside the German lines little enough hope of doing so was less still when the attitude towards his own command was an invincible suspicion and

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CHAPTER FOURTEEN

G

THE EMPEROR WITHOUT HIS CLOTHES

By the end of July 1944 the Russian armies had cut off the German Army Group North by a thrust to the Baltic; had destroyed Army Group Centre and reached the Vistula; and had driven Army Group South (Ukraine) back into Rumania.

Hitler was forced to commit all his reserves in order to hold any line in the east, but he stubbornly refused to withdraw his troops from the Baltic States, where they were left to fight a local war which had no bearing on the main battle for the approaches to Germany. Hitler's reasons for this refusal were the possible effect of such a withdrawal on Sweden (with the all-important iron-ore supplies), and the loss of the Baltic training grounds for the new U-boats on which he set great store. He argued that Schörner was engaging a large number of Russian divisions which would otherwise be used on other and more vital fronts. The Russians, however, were not short of manpower, while the Germans were. Guderian protested strongly against the decision, but in vain. In fact, after the big German defeats of the summer in the east, Hitler was still trying to hold much-reduced forces a longer line than that through which the Russians had already broken. The man who had once proclaimed mobility as the key to success now rejected any suggestion of mobility in defence in favour of the utmost rigidity.

The Russian break-through in Poland was followed at the end of July by an American break-through in France. On 28 July the Americans captured Coutances, and two days later Avranches; by the 31st they were into Brittany. The German left flank collapsed, and the war of movement in the west began.

The Emperor without

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Patton's Third Army striking eastwards for Le Mans, and the threat of encirclement at Falaise, were the plainest possible indication that the time had come for an immediate German withdrawal behind the Seine. Hitler, remote from the battle in his East Prussian headquarters, and ignorant of the massive superiority of the Allied forces, especially in the air, refused to consider such a course. Kluge was ordered to counter-attack at once. The S.S. generals at the front were the loudest in their protests against the folly of gambling the few remaining armoured divisions on an attack which seemed certain to fail. Kluge's only reply was that these were Hitler's orders and that the Führer would tolerate no argument.

When the operation failed Hitler peremptorily ordered the attack to be renewed. On 15 August, when Kluge, up at the front, was out of touch with his headquarters for twelve hours, Hitler leaped to the conclusion that the Field-Marshal was trying to negotiate a surrender. The next day he summoned Model from the Eastern Front and ordered him to take over Kluge's command at once. On his way back to Germany Kluge committed suicide: he closed a long letter of self-defence to Hitler with the advice to end the war.

Model was one of the few generals whom Hitler trusted and whom he allowed to argue with him. A rough, aggressive character, who had nothing in common with the stiff caste conventions of the German military tradition, Model had identified his fortunes with those of Hitler's régime. But neither Model nor anyone else could prevent the collapse of the German front in France.

While Patton struck out boldly for the east, and Paris was liberated, the German Army in the west was streaming back across the Seine in headlong retreat. In the circumstances Model did well to preserve anything from the rout. On 29 August, he reported to Hitler that out of the sixteen infantry

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divisions which he had got back over the Seine he could raise sufficient men to form four, but was unable to equip them with more than small arms. Another seven infantry divisions had been totally destroyed, while of some 2,300 German tanks and assault guns committed in Normandy, only 100 to 120 were brought back.

France was lost. It was now a question of whether the Rhine could be held. In the first few days of September Patton's Third Army reached the Moselle, and the British Second Army liberated Brussels, Louvain, and Antwerp. On the evening of 11 September an American patrol crossed the German frontier: five years after the Polish campaign, the war had reached German soil.

In a conference with three of his generals on the afternoon of 31 August Hitler made it clear that, whatever happened and whatever the cost to Germany, he was determined to maintain the struggle. In a mood strangely compounded of inflexible determination and self-pity, he called on the German people for one more effort, and for the last time the German people responded. They no longer saw, or even heard, the man whose orders they obeyed, but the image of the Führer was still strong enough to carry conviction, and conviction was powerfully reinforced by fear.

It was to fear that Goebbels now openly appealed. The news of the Morgenthau Plan, which provided for the dismemberment of Germany, the destruction of her industrial resources, and her conversion into an agricultural and pastoral country, appeared to offer proof that Goebbels was right when he declared that the Allies intended the extermination of a considerable proportion of the German people and the enslavement of the rest. The grim picture which Goebbels had been drawing for months of the German people's fate under a Russian occupation was now supplemented by the prospect of an equally ter-

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...rible revenge at the hands of the Western Allies.
...With the Red Army on the threshold of East Prussia,
...and the British and Americans on the edge of the
...Rhineland, the argument had an urgency it had
...never possessed before. To add point to it, Himmler
...announced on 10 September that the families of
...those deserting to the enemy would be summarily
...shot.

...The Allies' plan was to burst into Germany before
...the winter came, and to strike at the basis of her war
...economy in the Ruhr and Rhineland. Bad luck, bad
...weather, difficulties of supply, and differences of
...opinion within the Allied High Command, combined
...to defeat their hopes. To these must be added the un-
...expected recovery of the German Army. By the end
...of September it had rallied along the line of the
...German frontier and succeeded in forming a continu-
...ous front again west of the Rhine. Field-Marshal
...von Rundstedt, whom Hitler had recalled to be Com-
...mander-in-Chief in the west at the beginning of
...September, had few illusions about the future, yet
...the measures taken by him and by Model, as the
...Commander of Army Group B, won for Hitler the
...breathing space of the winter before the Allies
...could bring their full weight to bear in the battle
...for Western Germany.

...Hitler used this respite to build up as hurriedly
...as possible new forces with which to fill the gaps
...left by the summer's fighting. In the west alone
...1944 had cost him a million men. On 24 August
...Goebbels announced a total mobilization which went
...far further than any previous measures. With this
...last reserve of manpower Hitler hoped not only to
...re-form the divisions which had been broken up on
...both the Western and Eastern Fronts, but to create
...twenty to twenty-five new Volksgrenadier divisions,
...eight to ten thousand men strong, under Himmler's
...direction. This was partly bluff, for units which
...had been reduced to the fighting value of no more

G 452 Sept 1944

War-Lord, 1939-45

than a battalion were retained as divisions in the German Order of Battle. Rather than use the men he had available to rebuild these to their full strength, or break them up completely, Hitler preferred to set up new divisions and retain the old formations in being at a half or a quarter of their strength. In this way he could keep up the illusion that he was still able to increase his forces to meet the crisis. As a final measure Hitler called up every able-bodied man between the ages of sixteen and sixty to form a Volkssturm, or Home Guard.

At the beginning of September 1944 the total paper strength of the German Armed Forces was still over ten million men. It was Hitler's own decision that kept these very considerable forces scattered over half the Continent, holding hopeless positions, instead of concentrating for the defence of the Reich itself. He refused to abandon hope of reversing the situation by a dramatic stroke. Thus Western Holland must be held to allow the V2s to be directed against London; Hungary and Croatia for the bauxite supplies necessary for the jet aircraft; the Baltic coast with its training-grounds; and the naval bases in Norway for the new U-boats on which he built so much.

Thanks to Speer, German armaments production had not yet been crippled by the bombing. The German aircraft factories and those producing other arms maintained, and in some cases even increased, the rate of production. The greatest material difficulty was the desperate shortage of oil and petrol, due to the systematic Allied bombing of the synthetic oil plants, refineries, and communications. By the end of September the Luftwaffe had only five weeks' supply of fuel left. Moreover, Speer maintained arms production only by drawing heavily on supplies of raw materials which could scarcely be replaced. Germany made a remarkable recovery in the last three months of 1944, but it was the last

The Emperor without His
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Hitler was now drawing
there was nothing left.

Everything turned upon
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Var-Lord, 1939-45

The Emperor without His Clothes

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Everything turned upon the use which Hitler pro-
posed to make of the forces he had scraped together.
A momentary calm on all fronts encouraged his il-
lusions. But the resumption of the Allied attacks was
only a question of time, and the real weakness of the
German position was shown by the success of the
Red Army's autumn offensive in the Balkans.

For the Russians, having forced Hitler to throw
in all his reserves on the Centre Front in the sum-
mer, now reaped their advantage in the South. On
20 August a new offensive opened with the invasion
of Rumania, which capitulated in the first few days,
and the Russians were able to occupy the oilfields.
On 8 September the Red Army began the occupation
of Bulgaria, and the loss of Germany's two Balkan
satellites was accompanied by the withdrawal of
Finland from the war. In October the British freed
Athens, and the Russians reached Belgrade, where
they joined Tito's partisan forces. By the beginning
of December the Germans were besieged in Buda-
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Hitler did not ignore the danger from the south-
east, and the Germans succeeded in prolonging the
battle for the Hungarian capital into February 1945,
but he had already made up his mind in the autumn
that the new and re-formed divisions were to go to
the west. At the same time the panzer and panzer-
grenadier divisions already stationed in the west
were re-equipped, and over two-thirds of the Luft-
waffe's planes deployed in their support.

In deciding for the west against the east, Hitler
was not thinking in terms of defence of the German
frontiers; he thought solely of an offensive which
would take the Allies by surprise, enable him to
recapture the initiative and so gain time for the de-

Nov 1944

War-Lord, 1939-45

velopment of the new weapons and of the split between the members of the Grand Alliance upon which he counted to win the war. If the basis of this calculation was slender, it was natural for Hitler to think along these lines. For him at least the only choice lay between victory or death. A defensive campaign could defer a decision, but would not alter the situation. The one chance of doing that was to stake what was left on the gamble of attack. He saw a greater possibility of success in the west, where distances were shorter, less fuel would be needed, and strategic objectives of importance were more within the compass of his forces. Nor did he believe the Americans and British were as tough opponents as the Russians.

Accordingly, Hitler and Jodl set to work in great secrecy to plan a counter-offensive in the west for the end of November. The object of the attack was the recapture of the principal Allied supply port of Antwerp by a drive through the Ardennes and across the Meuse, which would have the effect of cutting Eisenhower's forces in two and trapping the British Army in the angle formed by the Meuse and the Rhine as they turn westwards towards the sea.

The idea was excellent. The last thing the Allied commanders expected was a German attack. The Ardennes sector was the weakest point in their front, and the loss of Antwerp would have been a major blow at their supply lines. But the idea bore no relation to the stage of the war which had now been reached. The permanent disparity between the resources of Germany in 1944 and those of the three most powerful states in the world could not be redressed by a single blow with the forces which Hitler was able to concentrate in the west. The utmost Hitler could hope to inflict on the Allied armies was a set-back, not a defeat, and in the process he ran the heavy risk of throwing away his last reserves.

The attempt of the men in command to argue

The Emperor without H

with Hitler, and to per limited objectives, proved other previous attempts. generals were right would the war was lost. The fin stedt with every detail times of the artillery b warning in Hitler's own altered in order to keep the handling of the battle ters from East Prussia to Western Front.

Four days before the 12 December, Hitler sum to a conference. After be ons and brief-cases and were led between a doubl deep bunker. Hitler mad which lasted for two hour stood behind every chair ment that was made.

Much of what Hitler s his career and of the war on the incongruity of the many was faced and predi 'artificially bolstered con more heavy blows' by the

At dawn on 16 Decembe Hitler at least achieved his opponents by surprise the German Army made never for a moment were of Antwerp. As soon as their balance the Germans back on the defensive, a evident that they would b the battle and withdraw.

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with Hitler, and to persuade him to accept more
limited objectives, proved as unsuccessful as all the
other previous attempts. To have admitted that the
generals were right would have meant admitting that
the war was lost. The final plans were sent to Rund-
stedt with every detail cut and dried down to the
times of the artillery bombardment, and with the
warning in Hitler's own handwriting: 'Not to be
altered' In order to keep even tighter control over
the handling of the battle Hitler moved his headquar-
ters from East Prussia to Bad Nauheim, behind the
Western Front.

Four days before the attack was due to begin, on
12 December, Hitler summoned all the commanders
to a conference. After being stripped of their weap-
ons and brief-cases and bundled into a bus, they
were led between a double row of S.S. troops into a
deep bunker. Hitler made a long, rambling speech
which lasted for two hours, during which S.S. guards
stood behind every chair and watched every move-
ment that was made.

Much of what Hitler said was a justification of
his career and of the war. He laid particular stress
on the incongruity of the alliance with which Ger-
many was faced and predicted the the collapse of the
'artificially bolstered common front' after a 'few
more heavy blows' by the German Army.

At dawn on 16 December the attack was launched.
Hitler at least achieved the satisfaction of taking
his opponents by surprise, and in the first few days
the German Army made considerable gains. Yet
never for a moment were the Germans within sight
of Antwerp. As soon as the Allies had recovered
their balance the Germans found themselves thrown
back on the defensive, and by Christmas it was
evident that they would be well advised to break off
the battle and withdraw.

Hitler furiously rejected any such suggestions.
Twice Guderian, who was responsible for the defence

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of the Eastern Front, visited Hitler's headquarters and tried to persuade him to transfer troops to the east, where there were ominous signs of Russian preparations for a new offensive. Hitler impatiently rejected Guderian's reports, declaring that the Russians were bluffing. After reinforcements had been sent to Budapest, the reserves for a front of 750 miles in the east totalled no more than twelve and a half divisions. Yet Hitler refused to write off the Ardennes offensive. Not only was Model ordered to make another attempt to reach the Meuse, but a new attack was to be launched into northern Alsace.

Once again the German attack fell short of Hitler's objective—this time Strasbourg—while Model's second attempt to break through the Ardennes was no more successful than the first. On 8 January Hitler reluctantly agreed to the withdrawal of the German armour on the Ardennes front. It was a tacit admission that he had failed. He continued to claim that he had inflicted a heavy defeat on the enemy, but the figures do not bear him out. The First and Third U.S. Armies fighting in the Ardennes lost 8,400 killed, with 69,000 wounded and missing. The total German casualties were around 120,000, in addition to the loss of 600 tanks and assault guns and over 1,600 planes. Most important of all, while the Americans easily made good their losses, Hitler's were irreplaceable.

Only 75 divisions were now left to guard against the most dangerous threat of all, the possibility of a Red Army thrust across the northern plains directed at the industrial districts of Silesia, Saxony, and Berlin itself. The divisions and equipment so laboriously scraped together in the closing months of 1944 had been expended without strengthening the defences in the east, and there were no more reserves to replace them. When Guderian tried to point out the dangers to Hitler at a conference on 9 January he was met with an hysterical outburst of rage. 'He

The Emperor without

had,' says Guderian, and every fact had picture. As he believed in fact, it was a picture of reality, however, fantasy. Hitler still given to the west and do with what he had the Red Army opened German defences when the onslaught of Russia along the line from the By the end of the month less than a hundred and the Berlin Home the line of the Oder.

During the late summer health became worse and he was taken to his bed. His doctors recommended a rest cure and he remained in East Prussia, but if he left

In the middle of September he lay down completely and was unable to get up from continual headache and stomach cramps, he was weak for a time his voice was weak and it became. Like the naked concrete wall to have lost all desire for

By one more effort he managed to get up and resumed his work. He was seen in the last six months of his life, his complexion, shuffling gait, Guderian, who was frequently seen. 'It was no longer simply the left side of his body that

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had,' says Guderian, 'a special picture of the world,
and every fact had to be fitted into that fancied
picture. As he believed, so the world must be: but,
in fact, it was a picture of another world.'

Reality, however, was to prove stronger than
fantasy. Hitler still insisted that priority must be
given to the west and told Guderian he must make
do with what he had in the east. But, on 12 January,
the Red Army opened its offensive in Poland and the
German defences went down like matchwood before
the onslaught of Russian divisions attacking all
along the line from the Baltic to the Carpathians.
By the end of the month Marshal Zhukov was within
less than a hundred miles of the German capital,
and the Berlin Home Guard was being sent to hold
the line of the Oder.

During the late summer and autumn Hitler's
health became worse and he was frequently confined
to his bed. His doctors urged him to go to the Ober-
salsberg for a rest cure, but he refused. So long as
he remained in East Prussia, he declared, it would
be held, but if he left it would fall to the Russians.

In the middle of September, however, he broke
down completely and had to return to bed. Apart
from continual headaches and an aggravation of his
stomach cramps, he was troubled by his throat, and
for a time his voice was scarcely recognizable, so
weak had it become. Lying on a camp-bed between
the naked concrete walls of the bunker, he appeared
to have lost all desire to go on living.

By one more effort of will Hitler recovered suffi-
ciently to get up and resume work, although those who
saw him in the last six months of his life agree in
their description of him as an old man, with an ashen
complexion, shuffling gait, shaking hands and leg. Gu-
derian, who was frequently in his company, writes:
'It was no longer simply his left hand, but the whole
left side of his body that trembled. . . . He walked

tween the early Hitler of the Vienna days and the Hitler of 1944-5 than between either and the dictator of Germany at the height of his power. The crude hatred, contempt, and resentment which were the deepest forces in his character appeared undisguised. They found expression in the increasing vulgarity of his language. It was the authentic voice of the gutter again.

The man who had made it his first principle never to trust anyone now complained bitterly that there was no one he could trust. Only Eva Braun and Blondi were faithful to him, he declared, quoting Frederick the Great's remark: 'Now I know men, I prefer dogs.'

Years before, Hermann Rauschning, describing Nazism as the St Vitus's Dance of the twentieth century, had diagnosed its essential element of nihilism. In his conversations with Hitler during the years 1932-4 he records many remarks that betray the underlying passion for destruction which was only cloaked during the period of his success.

In talking to Rauschning, Hitler frequently became intoxicated with the prospect of a revolutionary upheaval which would destroy the entire European social order. In 1934, when Rauschning asked him what would happen if Britain, France, and Russia made an alliance against Germany, Hitler replied: 'That would be the end. But even if we could not conquer them, we should drag half the world into destruction with us, and leave no one to triumph over Germany. There will not be another 1918. We shall not surrender.'

This was the stage Hitler had now reached, and he was as good as his word. Goebbels shared Hitler's mood, and Nazi propaganda in the final phase has a marked note of exultation in the climax of destruction with which the war in Europe ended. But Hitler's determination to drag Europe down with him was

The Emperor without

most clearly expressed the war to the bitter 'scorched earth' policy best to dissuade Hitler: man people must still; were to be overthrown. a memorandum in which four to eight weeks, a lapse was certain. A remaining resources if enemy could not affect overriding obligation regard to their own fate man people should be reconstructing their lives. Hitler was adamant.

gorical and detailed orders communications, rolling factories and supplies in ing for Speer, he told the nation also will be. There is no need to construct primitive existence any better to destroy even selves. The nation has future belongs solely to Besides, those who ren little value; for the good

In these senseless orders and to shoot those who rective he found some retrained anger which postponed thanks to the devotion were not fully carried out remarks, this mood was product of impotent rage power there was for him German troops for whom

* * *

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

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

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

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

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

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

at the image of the paunchy, be-
their ancient altar.

then by equipment shortages.
Göring returned to Carinhall.
not diminished. On typical nights
the fighter-controller's radio chan-
Hitler's speeches. On December
the Me 262 bomber—although Hitler
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s, you can figure what that'll mean

ented Göring with something of a
itzbach, and Hofer unpacked from
purest art treasures Göring had ever
paratroops in Italy. Even Göring be-
le. His inquiries revealed that the
from Naples galleries to the moun-
connivance of the new Nazi "Art
mann Göring Division had offered
172 crates would eventually arrive
other sixteen now lay spread out
size bronze statues of Hermes
from Pompeii, two stags from the
and a stack of paintings too: two
ia"), a Claude Lorrain landscape,
and Pieter Breughel the Elder's
the Blind." His barely used con-
n "temporary" display at Carinhall
y. Hitler told him to remove them
at Kurfürst, air-force headquarters

who rescued these famous treasures
solemnly accused the Reichsmar-
sino treasures: In view of the de-
pers upon the historic abbey just a
were, however, in no position to

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Jan 1944

THE BLIND

mouthed, dynamic right-hander evade final responsibility for rose to the challenge and machine tools; aircraft production

On February 24, Göring paid he was taking three weeks leave

The next day the new fighting ministry. It was a further sign of rivals.

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Febr. 1944

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

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

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

March 1944

IMMIN

38

IMMINENT DANGER WEST

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

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

the glittering procession of capital yet again—“An exte Milch entered thoughtfully

Despite these raids, mor bassador cabled to Tokyo t watch the spectacle “with He attributed this “excellen sures like the “Göring Reli market luxuries bought by C saturation-bombing raids w people felt that they had no

This trend was reflected Bormann. Himmler came t report to the Reichsmarsch supplied thirty-six thousand thousand more for the mass- additional convicts to labor

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March 1944

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s made their deepest daylight thrust On the seventh, after they bombed to aircraft production—putting Göring the tanks and submarines on On the eighth, Milch and Galland erations room at Döberitz watching

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Feb. 1944

IMMINE

were dropping and on fire, but was going down in flames, but missed me, but my plane was

Two weeks later, on the night of a defense victory of the war. The RAF Despite deafening jamming and difficulty in sighting their prey, the RAF sent trails across the clear sky once more by their radar emissions. The 1st, 2nd, 3rd, and 7th Fighter Groups south of Bonn onward," his war route was marked by crashes." heavy bombers that night; the RAF over Germany, and a dozen more. After this catastrophe the RAF suffered six months.

A few hours later Milch was producing 1944 production figures.

"Tell him I got them already!" Despite the crippling losses of 100 more planes that month than the RAF aircraft and repairing 530 more. It was as satisfactory as the one just in

As April 1944 began, Albert Speer put it, malingering—in the Tyrol, the forceful deputy Karl-Otto Saur or strategy for the coming year. To win the war only by increasing that," he said, "is the one hundred percent, to clear the skies over Germany himself six days later. "I need the first of all we've got to have a first alpha and the omega of it all."

Hitler considered that Speer had a bunker for Me 262 jet production. Now he told Göring to get on with it.

The next day Göring sent for Speer that had built the autobahns before and loyally explained that Speer the Reich territories now. However, for bombproof aircraft factories, see Hitler that evening. The Führer of what Speer might say. Walking

March 1944

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

March 1944

IMMINE

giving the defense of their oil manufacture,” and the British

In the weeks before the invasion that was to turn up again at his planes had begun machine-gunning. The public responded with indifference. More than one German pilot and shotguns in the resulting carnage were greeted more often than German! Göring had to issue. The high command deliberated. Göring wanted the Allied machine-gunning squad, preferably held ‘as his staff were told on May 1 culprits, as he pointed out to recorded that Hitler had decided to be executed on the spot, e.g. airmen or public transport or historian George Shuster that led to the Geneva Convention.

At one Hitler conference his marshal refused the Führer’s Luftwaffe officer who had resigned Munich. A few weeks later, Himmler, Göring again argued on June 19: “We have to do all against enemy airmen *not* invade can always be dealt with by the enemy has forbidden his aviation for the time being.

The respite on the Obersalzberg, Göring waited in his mountain. Fifteenth Air Force flew overhead while the U.S. Eighth Air Force. The RAF passed overhead by night in Austria.

May 1944 was almost over, Göring, however, was satisfied with it. On the twenty-fourth, his pilot of Bourmemouth, Poole, Portsmouth, English ports were now crammed that Normandy, rather than the

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

May 1944

IMMIN

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Göring thumped his fist
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May 1944

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

ex-chief of staff General L as a wimpish "drawing-room evening. "The whole crew afterward, "has come from with the elimination of these the ranks of the entire Wehr than Göring felt obligatory, historian Shuster, "more pe In a secret speech to air assassination attempt "the g

GÖRING: Ignoring for t let me mention one, ge now viewed the Prussia forth?

If in South America and two months later vi and aplomb—with a gentlemen there is som America is it the custom boss's feet.

The army plotters had intende Hitler. Despite their failure: t lame approach to Stumpff's L time Göring had already issu squadrons, and flights reading "All Luftwaffe units in Reich Stumpff. Orders of army regio to be obeyed."

Göring refused to allow Hi involvement. "No officer of m a hand in such a thing." The Lieutenant Colonel Caesar vor general staff in Paris. Hofack reconnaissance, General von l Barsewisch had thereupon tip thereupon tactfully stayed awa settled. According both to Ges Rudolf Diels, the Reichsmars had actually attended plotting s civilian head; and of course, as finance minister Johannes Popi It certainly seems incredible

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* D.T. Almighty Providence helped to be myself!

July 1944

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

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

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

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

July 1944

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GÖRING: Just as the B your division with a too. . . . Comrades, ground in Russia—th. Not one German wor bestial hands. And if should come into this. when no soldiers of th

The total subservience of th been reborn by the bomb bla raphers wrote in his diary:

Before today's midday a brief speech to the Fü of the Wehrmacht's gra salute be introduced in The Führer signed this spontaneously saluted.

It was Goebbels, not Göring, for total war. On the train back out his heart about their enfe Baumbach. Baumbach decided Mortified by Hitler's new sn the Wolf's Lair to Rominten, every hint that he should return

At first his "illness" appear ill to receive Herbert Backe for introduce Ondarza to the Staats: They went for a coach ride thr he was finished with Reichmin him, "won't let a minister go v

This was Göring's protection him, referring to him behind his be loath to let him go. Powerf destinies.

After Korten's painful death, the Göring nor Loerzer in a favorabl general now running the Luftwa take over as chief of air staff. instead the mild-mannered and a

unaware of the conspiratorial ferment. ("Who would have thought," in a letter, "that an entire clique of old have practiced treachery unobtrusively but more than fortuitously?" "When a contemptible assassination was at any man came out alive. The lethal from the Führer . . . yet by a miracle was not present myself, but arrived certainly had been present at the Hitler time plotters had first hoped to set off seriously considered recruiting him. The turncoat police president of Berlin, It was hoped at one time to include weeks later, in British captivity, "but I, was opposed to this on the grounds (spring) would be sympathetic to the racial condition—the consequence of a doubtful asset."

ough to figure only on their hit lists. the Gestapo seized from a hotel safe, ly corrupt Göring—the 'Reichsmarschall' to his so-called 'Führer'—has the and responsibilities of the general

However it would not have escaped broadcast to the world late on the twentynized Grand Admiral Karl Dönitz to

decided that the division bearing his name must become the savior of East Prussia. now assigned to defend the Rominten in 1944, to his Escort Regiment—its a blessed Providence had intervened a new bazooka (*Panzerfaust*) issued Russian tank. "You should see what encouraged them. "For brave men even much man can defend himself even at also said, "Any soldier who throws to retreat faster, puts himself beyond and every one of you, whether NCO is like that on the spot."

July 1944

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

June 1944

WIT

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WITCH HUNT

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

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

pered scandalous allegations about in Italy, and Pohl's female dietitian spent hours swimming or sunbathing.

In France Göring's ground troops, the Luftwaffe Field Division made a name for itself in the summer of 1944, its 88's emplaced by III Flak Corps to meet the American armor's advance at Falaise. But Göring was more concerned about the Luftwaffe's position in France. On August 13, he ordered Alfred R. to move from the Nazi repositories in Paris to delay."

The collapse in France was the result of their cue from Göring, loaded with loot and other booty, and headed for the Reich past disenchanted party officials. As Göring's troops moved, the WL prefix on Luftwaffe messages disappeared. Hundreds of brand-new radar sets were sent to the Reich.

Himmler and Bormann reported the collapse. Göring pleaded with Hitler, telephoning his chief judge advocate. "Where are they!" He realized it was a matter of time before we were winning," he would remain got worked up if our units took over or womanized. But now the times are changing. Yes, when we were winning, people were sending us out to the men."

While Pohl in Italy and the Luftwaffe truck transport and gasoline to look for II Fighter Corps in France and drawn vehicles" if they could; and 200 liters of J-2 fuel taxiing for five use oxen to pull the jet planes' around.

Sensing his powers of intercession were up the escape of his remaining Jewish. The Hague, the Gestapo had detained Jew. Bachstitz had the good fortune to be Jewish) sister. Hofer wrote to SS in Holland, "The Reichsmarschall and the case held over until I report that the case be dropped. "Bachstitz in September 1943 the dealer divorced her, thereby protecting it from seizure."

Aug 1944

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

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

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

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

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

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

HUNT

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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Göring changed the subject.
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Aug 1944

Sept 1944

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Göring changed the subject.

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

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

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

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

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

I ask for concrete details.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Sep 1944

Göring knew that the man his air force was General von Greim ever to take him up and the general arrived, or intercepted by an order from the Wolf's Lair the Führer's manifold "sins" and offenses.

Swallowing this fresh humiliation, but found his anger, Reitsch, the general's mistress.

Like Kreipe's in July, G position with Himmler, Bon

The growing estrangement being, already fragile from and bedridden for two weeks, and began to press for hastened to comply. On September "The Reichsmarschall . . . h courts-martial to try offenders to shoot them in front of the

The possibility of delivering Hermann Göring summoned to quarters and promised, "From revealed that large numbers of flotilla Reich commander General as chief of air staff—cynical loyalty." It was swiftly rewarded same day. Kreipe—who had a photograph of Göring—came

Von Greim had seen the seething. Afterward, I was shattered, said people were a traitor. Says he is and him, Greim is finished. I

Kreipe reiterated his warning to the Reichsmarschall.

The Red Army now began demonstratively remained at the was confident that if Nazi German missiles, tanks, and jet planes Swift and invulnerable, the Allied supply beaches and bat

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to Hitler, had married Eva Braun's "Togetherness with Fegelein," Göring kept dishing up to Hitler the most Bormann naturally saw them as a threat against me." The dossier kept a real threat. "Never once," Göring even at the height of my powers, enjoyed in those last years. We Intriguer—and the Filthy Swine!"

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

Oct 1944

...were screaming into action
...first Me 262 jet bombers were
...Nijmegen. In relaxation of Hit-
...squadron with the first fifty Me
...October from bases at Achmer
...and thirty-seven hundred fighter
...ely curtailed by dwindling fuel,

...much-maligned air staff. On Oc-
...doomy memorandum that General
...45," morbidly depicting a Reich
...Göring sent for Kreipe on the
...ble. "It's defeatist!" he screamed.
...I'm sorely disappointed in you.
...ou've lost faith in victory. Aren't
...e general staff ever to assess our
...ch esteem I'd have to show this
...end of you."

...halves across the table. Kreipe's
...could the Reichsmarschall now

...sent for General Kurt Pflugbeil,
...ast. Pflugbeil was untainted by
...own the job.

...eister. "Meister," growled Gö-
...nd getting any more black marks

...by fuel shortages, the RAF now
...4, while one thousand American
...re RAF bombers attacked Duis-
...burg that night). Confronted now
...rce units on the ground, Göring
...ly individuals—sometimes even
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...ehend such cowards. "Execu-
...lo not require prior authorization

...ar and compassionate Hermann
...like Richthofen and Reichenau
...life and death over their men.

...Russian Front attacked East
...visions and two armored corps.
...an divisions and a brigade of

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Nov 1944

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Koller reminded him of the insult to the job, under the proviso that he that of course I could, and took a pininess." "How long will this last

Two days after that, Göring was in hospital in Berlin. To Reichsmarschall bed, Göring looked oddly naked and self-satisfied" nonetheless. "The nurses told Darré. "Pale as a ghost going to last more than a few weeks."

Through party channels still met Lieutenant Colonel von Klossinski in the air force. Göring seethed, told him to take charge of purging the colonels.

Klossinski balked at the job. "He told me: 'You shut yourself away here and more unsavory officers of your caliber.' "Before Dunkirk," the colonel heard you say Bruno is my laziness."

"I need somebody I can drink said Göring truculently.

To the chagrin of Galland and former bomber commander, to meet him, he asked Pelz to take the chair in Berlin's Gatow Air Staff Academy and bomber aces. Göring told them the air force, and their job was to do on whatever topic they liked, except the Me 262. The meeting by officers like Pelz, Herrmann, and B. Schmid, Trautloft, and Galland; and Nazi fanatics like Klossinski, Staut

Baumbach reported to Göring at transcript. Asked about personnel that Loerzer, Brauchitsch, and Dietrich and bristled. Göring soothed his ruler Air Leader's Gold Medal with Dia

With unbridled hypocrisy Göring criticizing Luftwaffe commanders abandoned without order, troops abandoned as though his own frantic salvaging. he continued, "Private goods have destroyed in panic." He added, "

Nov 1944

abandoned the idea of dispossessing Hitler still felt too close to the force adjutant von Below said poured out his irritation in a letter he wrote, "to the constant failure at Stalingrad and North Africa." The force was over. In a farewell conference candidly referred to the general's never again to commit such dark deeds, "that there is going to be light it out—on the Vistula, on the latter rivers were in the heart of

Hitler to revert to diplomacy.

"That I cannot do, because then "Since 1938," he added, taking gesture, "I have felt that the Führer entrop's appointment [on February have been excluded from several

est still voluntarily shorn of medals, fair, the resurgent German fighter ng the Western Allies. On October ander of the strategic air forces in hat maintaining air supremacy was pusand more Allied airmen. "Our ery expensive." On November 2, 0 fighter planes attacked the Leuna ed a record seven hundred fighter s shot down three bombers without

forced him to appoint Karl Koller wrangled with the Bavarian general hat day Koller entered this account

ork, and achievements in re-oke in utter dejection about him from every side—the up to the back teeth and the ymore; wishes he were dead. ht with them in the front line is told him that only he can

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

"If we had not invaded Normandy," he asked, "do you think you could have beaten Russia?"

Göring leaned forward and whispered in mock confidence that if Eisenhower had given his *personal* guarantee, the Germans would have socked the Soviets so hard that they would have seen the sun (he jabbed one finger skyward), the moon (another jab), and the stars (a whole galaxy of jabs). Hechler roared with laughter.

That Monday, July 23, a Soviet officers' commission arrived. Bellowing, "The Russians are coming!" Göring vanished into his cell. The next day he saw them nonetheless, and Hechler heard the Russians screaming at him.

Suddenly [wrote Hechler four years later in a private memoir] I heard Göring starting to answer the interrogators. I couldn't distinguish what he was saying, but it was interrupted repeatedly by chuckles from the Russians. Soon Göring's voice rose, and the chuckles swelled to roars of laughter. For two hours the noise of guffaws echoed down the halls, and then the Russians came out slapping each other on the back.

Afterward, Göring came in to see the major and hitched up his baggy pants with a swagger. "I really had those Russkies rolling in the aisles, didn't I!"

Undoubtedly Fat Stuff was coming back fighting, and the Americans only had themselves to blame. On July 23, 1945, Colonel Andrus recorded a further cut in the paracodeine dosage. "He looks very good, is losing much weight [and] has apparently no other ill effects—except that he would like to get larger doses."

He still worked off his old grievances. He told Ribbentrop impolitely where he could file an eighty-five-page memorandum he had just composed. He still insisted that *he* was Hitler's surrogate, and nobody else. "Dönitz," he complained once more to Shuster on the twenty-third, "just took command on the basis of a radio message that was never confirmed in writing. Bormann signed it 'p.p. the Führer.'"

He had shed seventeen pounds already and was still losing weight. By July 26, his dosage had been cut to fifteen pills. Andrus noticed his disgust at "being short-changed," but that was all. On August 4, the colonel reported, "Göring states that his health is better now than it has been for years." He explained to his superiors, "It is our purpose not only to keep Göring well, but to eliminate any possible bar to trial or punishment."

Göring had already made the simple decision that eluded his co-defendants in the coming trial: to die like a man. He had never been afraid of death. As a lad, he had stood his ground when an Austrian avalanche had crashed around him. "The true German," he had sermonized to his staff on November 25, 1944, "faces up to the ultimate sacrifice with a certain sovereignty and peace of mind. . . . For me, life on this planet has just been an intermission

during which I have had to perform. The devil take it, before I allow myself to grovel just to cling on to this trial."

On August 5, the U.S. Army announced that the names of prisoners to be turned over to the Russians were being named. The name headed the list. He had been in the last. Five days later his paratrooper

Unwell once again, he remained in his old heart trouble, while his mind wandered left. All came to say their goodbyes churlishly refused. Dönitz's adjutant remained at the head of his column to convert into a kind of throne; the naval officer could see his old form and vitality promised him, with the glint of steel on me. There're one or two things

That afternoon, August 12, he flew from Luxembourg to Nuremberg on his last airplane journey of his life. He was keenly about the flight. "His last American officer three days later was found in his dressing gown with a heart attack and . . . bronchitis."

Nuremberg was a landscape of its adjoining detention block. It was thirteen feet by seven. Göring sat along the left wall. Just to the right of the bowl was set in an alcove to the fresh plaster patches when the lack of electric wiring, the windows high up the end wall of ducking out of this last battle on the little table—so flimsy, it could stand on it—with pride. "Daddy," she had written on the wall such longing for you. Many times

Tight security precautions projected daily Vitamin B and protected the harsh new jail regime. To occasionally allowed one aspirin lowered it.

Colonel Andrus had ordered

Nov 1944

Nov 1944

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1945

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The devil take it, before I allow any man to drag me down and make me
grovel just to cling on to this tattered thing called life!"

On August 5, the U.S. Army sent to SHAEF headquarters the formal list
of prisoners to be turned over to the control of prosecuting counsel. Göring's
name headed the list. He had become number-one man in Nazi Germany at
last. Five days later his paracodeine medication was stopped for good.

Unwell once again, he remained upstairs in the Grand Hotel, suffering the
old heart trouble, while his more fortunate fellow prisoners were mustered
and left. All came to say their farewells except for two Staatssekretäre who
churlishly refused. Dönitz's adjutant was the last to come up. Göring received
him esconced at the head of his bed in a heap of blankets that he had contrived
to convert into a kind of throne, as though sitting in the high chair at Carinhall.
The naval officer could see he was in a brilliant mood, having obviously
found his old form and vitality. "Whatever happens," the Reichsmarschall
promised him, with the glint of coming battle in his eye, "you can count
on me. There're one or two things I'm going to say at the coming trial."

That afternoon, August 12, 1945, an American C-47 transport plane flew
him from Luxembourg to Nuremberg. Perhaps unaware that it was to be the
last airplane journey of his life, he thoroughly enjoyed the trip and chattered
keenly about the flight. "His health is probably not very good," warned an
American officer three days later, "and on two recent occasions he was to
be found in his dressing gown and pajamas in bed, as a result first of a slight
heart attack and . . . bronchitis."

Nuremberg was a landscape of ruins surrounding the Palace of Justice and
its adjoining detention block. The cells were low-ceilinged cubicles barely
thirteen feet by seven. Göring would sleep on a metal cot bolted to the floor
along the left wall. Just to the right of the narrow doorway a porcelain toilet
bowl was set in an alcove to afford minimal privacy. As his eyes took in
the fresh plaster patches where iron hooks had been ripped out of the wall,
the lack of electric wiring, and the Perspex freshly installed in the tiny
windows high up the end wall, he must have smiled. He had no intention
of ducking out of this last battle prematurely. He placed his few possessions
on the little table—so flimsy that no prisoner, let alone a Hermann Göring,
could stand on it—with pride of place going to a snapshot of Edda. "Dear
Daddy," she had written on the back, "come back to me again soon. I have
such longing for you. Many thousand kisses from your Edda!!!!"

Tight security precautions were also taken with medication. Pflücker in-
jected daily Vitamin B and provided Seconal tablets to help him sleep despite
the harsh new jail regime. Tormented by rheumatism, Göring was also oc-
casionaly allowed one aspirin, but he was watched to ensure that he swal-
lowed it.

Colonel Andrus had ordered pencils and paper provided so that the pris-

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both, and his nature is just as far removed from the nothing from which he emerges as from the infinite into which he is cast. This is our veritable condition. This confines our knowledge within fixed limits which we are unable to transcend, being both incapable of knowing everything and incapable of ignoring everything. We are situated on a wide middle plane, always unsafe, always swaying between ignorance and knowledge. . . . We burn with the desire to found everything and to build a tower that reaches up to infinity. But our whole structure crashes and the deep earth opens its abyss." "We are powerless in proving — no dogmatism can refute that; we carry within us the idea of truth — no scepticism can refute that. We yearn for truth and find only uncertainty. We seek happiness and find only misery. . . . But our misery is the result of our greatness, and our greatness the result of our misery. . . . For man knows that he is wretched. He is wretched because he knows it; but he is great because he knows that he is wretched. What a chimera is this which we call man! Miracle, confusion, contradiction! Judge over all things and impotent earthworm, treasure-chamber of truth and dark room of uncertainty, glory and shame of the universe: let him praise himself, I will humiliate him; let him humiliate himself, I will praise him; and so persistently will I contradict him that he shall at last comprehend that he is incomprehensible." (Whereon Voltaire, who commented the *Pensées*, remarked: "Sheer invalid's babble"; and we in turn should retort that while it is understandable enough that the brilliant herald and spokesman of the eighteenth century should hear nothing but "babble" in this passage, it is incomprehensible that Voltaire of all people should make a reproach of illness, for whence did he himself derive his genius if not from his "physiological inferiority," his crooked spine, his abnormally feeble constitution, and his pathological irritability?)

The Pascalian anthropology may be summed up in the sentence: "Man is but a weak reed, but a thinking one." "*Ainsi toute notre dignité consiste dans la pensée. . . . Travaillons donc à bien penser: voilà le principe de la morale.*" But good use of the power of thought must not lead anywhere but to Christ. "All the bodies that are — the firmament, the stars, the earth, the natural kingdoms — do not count for as much as the smallest of minds; for it has knowledge of all these and of itself, and the body

has no knowledge of: together with all their stirring of love; for let Out of all bodies the smallest thought: the different order. All bodies forth a single stirring love is of a different kind. We have already more definitely, that the scientific mind: laying hold of natural sciences, war, even more of thought produced problem, either beginning or else regard it as a different way, the world only sought after science the few of the elect, the greatest mind that the

The greatest, but another thinker, equal alliance but not in illustrious age of Louis XI to turn — and, what he remains right up to man, although his life overcast skies of Holy Louis was no more than invented by him — the more deserves close and surprising lesson: historical results in the few individuals who: superfluous, and even same way if they were oddities whose sphere men of their age considered other hand all the age

Antiquity
Jews in 144

the nothing from
and he is cast. This
knowledge within
being both incapar-
oring everything.
is unsafe, always
. We burn with
power that reaches
into the deep earth
— no dogmatism
truth — no scepti-
only uncertainty.

But our misery
is the result of our
faith. He is wretched
because he knows that he is
an! Miracle, con-
fessing impotent earth-
liness of uncertainty,
himself, I will hu-
miliate him; and so
last comprehend
him; who commented
"; and we in turn
admit that the bril-
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is "physiological
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and up in the sen-
sation." "Ainsi toute
avillons donc à
the good use of the
to Christ. "All
the earth, the natu-
the smallest of
self, and the body

1944
has no knowledge of anything. And all bodies and all minds put to-
gether with all their works do not count for as much as the least
stirring of love; for love belongs to an incomparably higher order.
Out of all bodies taken together there could not be formed the
smallest thought: that is impossible, because thought is of a dif-
ferent order. All bodies and all minds together are unable to bring
forth a single stirring of true love: that is impossible, because true
love is of a different and entirely supernatural order."

11. We have already had occasion to observe, and shall soon see
more definitely, that the seventeenth century marks the victory of
the scientific mind: in all spheres it makes its triumphant entry,
laying hold of nature-research, language-research, politics, eco-
nomics, war, even morality, poetry, and religion. All the systems
of thought produced by this century, in dealing with every vital
problem, either begin with the scientific outlook as their founda-
tion or else regard it as their highest and final goal. One only took
a different way, the way of the god-illuminated genius, in that he not
only sought after science like everyone else, not only found it like
the few of the elect, but conquered it. This one was Pascal, the
greatest mind that the Gallic race has ever borne.

The greatest, but not the most effective. The most effective was
another thinker, equal to him in breadth but not in depth, in bril-
liance but not in illuminating power. This man created the bril-
liant age of Louis XIV — the *grand siècle*, to which we are about
to turn — and, what is more, the complete modern Frenchman as
he remains right up to the Revolution and the World War. This
man, although his life was spent in quiet and solitude under the
overcast skies of Holland, was in fact the true Sun-King, and
Louis was no more than a gilded decorative doll and lay figure
invented by him — a most extraordinary process, and one which
the more deserves close study in that it contains a very valuable
and surprising lesson: namely, that permanently effective results,
historical results in the true sense, have ever been achieved by a
few individuals who struck their contemporaries as unessential,
superfluous, and even harmful pedants and would strike us in the
same way if they were alive now; the work of a few fantastic
oddities whose sphere of activity lay completely aloof from all that
men of their age considered important and central; and on the
other hand all the apparently important things which made so

The
overcomer

The true
roi soleil

THE PSYCHOPATHIC GOD: ADOLF HITLER

dearly called "my Rudi . . . my Hessler!" and whose loyalty to Hitler was canine, was openly ridiculed as "the greatest mistake of my life." Albert Speer, an admirer who wanted desperately to be close to Hitler and who had said of him, "If Hitler could have had a friend, I would have been that friend," also said that Hitler's attitude toward his intimates was one of contempt: "He seemed to enjoy destroying the reputation and self-respect of even his close associates and faithful comrades." 117

Hitler was a lethargic person who frittered away thousands of working hours in idle self-indulgence. Day after day and in all-night sessions he forced his associates to listen to interminable and empty dissertations on trivia. Yet he was also a man of remarkable energy and capacity for hard work. In the electoral campaign of 1932, for example, he traveled tirelessly by airplane—though he was frightened by air travel—and in one day spoke to several hundred thousand people. On his first campaign swing across Germany he visited 21 towns in seven days; on the second, 25 towns in eight days; on the third, 50 towns in 16 days; on the fourth, another 50 towns in 24 days. 118

He had a taste for erotic art and pornography; he was also a prude with unctuous concern for proper conduct. He did not permit swearing or off-color jokes; gentlemen never removed their coats no matter how warm the weather. He was shocked at Stalin for having his picture taken while smoking a cigarette and furious with Mussolini for being seen in public in bathing trunks. Great statesmen, he observed in one of his more perishable political pronouncements, do not run around bare-chested. He was terribly afraid that "some skillful forger would set my head on a body in bathing trunks!" 119

To limit the number of times a tailor touched him, he would have many shirts and suits made at one fitting; these were expected to last for years. He was embarrassed to disrobe before doctors and never allowed an X ray of his chronically ailing stomach. He rejected out-of-hand Himmler's suggestion that some of his ailments might be alleviated by a masseur. He liked to have his body carefully covered at all times, and even in the hottest weather he wore long white underwear—as was observed for the first time in public on that sultry, hot day of 20 July 1944, when the bomb explosion tore off part of his trousers. 120

He was careful to say that he was not in the least embarrassed by nudity—it was others who were: "The idea of nakedness torments only the priests, for the education they undergo makes them perverts." 121

Hitler was both a pathetic little man filled with self-pity and an awesomely effective dictator. In childish bids for sympathy, he sniffled about the loneliness of his life and how he would be neglected and forgotten when he grew old:

The Image and the Man

Perhaps one of my former a but I can't count on it. Aside I with me. Fräulein Braun and anyone voluntarily stay with will take notice of me an my successor. Perhaps once a yea

One day during the electoral intimate, Hitler was feeling sorry soup and asked plaintively for ass cure his stomach cramps, excessive he started talking about his determin, strode around the room, and greatness. Before one's eyes, the formed into the great demagogue force them to become true believers.

The Führer flatly denied that weakness. Max Planck remembered in which he shouted that it was 'him of having weak nerves. "I tel of steel!" When he said that, Plar spoke ever faster, and worked h was nothing for me to do but . . who observed his Führer closely c he so often praised, he himself did

Hitler felt it necessary to pr feelings of inferiority. "Only an i say that I have an inferiority com: I have never had an inferiority i later: "Do the English really ima could have an inferiority complex?"

One evening during the war, When a secretary had the temer mistake in the melody, the Führ nerability—and his lack of humor it wrong. It is the composer whc His press chief, who followed him if an associate corrected him on knowledge, "no matter how valid t his mistake." His personal interp time I interpreted for Hitler [19 make . . . an admission of error eve:

Such statements need some q could, in fact, admit a mistake. hedged his admission in a number thing a colossal blunder when he a

* ~~that~~ D. T. H. is insulation for his. One respect where he could be

THE PSYCHOPATHIC GOD: ADOLF HITLER

nesses like to believe those facts that support their personal convictions. Thus the Nazis, who had been ordered to carry out their Führer's last command, wanted very much to believe that his body really had been reduced to ashes. Hence the chauffeur—consciously or unconsciously—moved up the time when he said he started to burn the bodies to 2:00 P.M., whereas every other witness sets the time at about 4:00 P.M. The Russians, who wanted Hitler to die by poison, have consistently played down the possibility of a pistol shot, or, like Mrs. Rzhnevskaja, have conjectured that the bullet entered Mrs. Hitler's body, not her husband's.

Historians are not immune from the inclination to accept that testimony which supports their own point of view. Hugh Trevor-Roper understandably wants Hitler to have died the way he did in his admirable little book. He therefore scoffs at the Soviet autopsy report and those who take it seriously.²¹¹ Werner Maser has persuaded himself that the body found by the Russians was not Hitler's because he prefers to believe that Hitler was sexually normal. Therefore the cadaver with one missing testicle found by the Russians could not belong to his Hitler.²¹² And what about Waite? He is not without his own prejudices. He prefers to think that the Russian autopsy proved Hitler to be a monorchid. He would also like to believe that Hitler was discovered in the death room with his hands folded in his lap. That, however, is a conjecture. Eyewitnesses are not quite sure where Hitler's hands were placed; they may have been resting on his knees. But given Hitler's continual concern about his scrotum and his lifelong habit in moments of tension of covering it protectively with folded hands, it seems likely that *in extremis*, while awaiting death, he would have folded his hands over his crotch. Let us assume that he did. And until new discoveries appear to prove us wrong—as they may very well do—let us accept the evidence of the autopsy and suggest a solution to the problem of how Hitler died: he took poison and then was shot, but not through the mouth.

We are assuming that in planning their deaths, Hitler and his bride agreed to take cyanide together. Capsules had been prepared for them, and cyanide was said to be virtually instantaneous and very sure. That they both swallowed cyanide is attested by the autopsy.

How then justify and explain the pistol shot? One of the few points of agreement among many witnesses is that a shot was fired in the death room. Everyone except Linge heard a shot, and gunpowder was smelled by everyone entering the room. But why a pistol shot at all when Hitler and his bride already had available lethal doses of cyanide? The answer must lie in Hitler's psyche. *He could not trust people—he never could.*

In particular, he could no longer trust Heinrich Himmler, the man who had supplied the cyanide capsules, for this man, "*Der treue Heinrich*" as Hitler had called him in a better day, was now a traitor treating with the enemy behind his back. What if Himmler in his perfidy had adulterated the capsules so that they would only render the Führer

From Private Neurosis to Publ.

unconscious—to be handed Hitler was suspicious. He to It worked beautifully—but it

It was absolutely cruci totally consumed—that not emy. It must never happen ported had happened to Mu upside down in a public sq by a hate-filled crowd. Nor being suspended from a m bodies of German generals in would he go on display as a sure indeed that he was deac He could not trust the poison *coup de grâce*? Who indeed?

Linge, his valet of many or Bormann were obvious or with all of them: they were which Hitler had once calle fealty to him alone—was nov their belt buckles had becom There was, Hitler was now c perfidy he had not suffered.

In the whirling world of person he could rely upon to and that was Eva Braun-Hitler flown into a doomed city to obedience by fulfilling his eve mands: she was a sportswom deed, she wrote to a close frie practice made her "so good a pete." ²¹³ And she had been fou

But Linge thought Hitler his left temple and exited fro taken, for Hitler was not left-shook so badly he could not co the right temple would indicat were made an inch or two awa have been the case if Eva Brai the muzzle pushed tightly ag gaseous recoil, leaving a large pulling portions of the brain ou

Cyanide acts quickly bu could have had time to bite th pistol tightly against his right said that he was found with his

port their personal convictions. carry out their Führer's last hat his body really had been consciously or unconsciously—ad to burn the bodies to 2:00 time at about 4:00 P.M. The ison, have consistently played like Mrs. Rzhnevskaja, have tler's body, not her husband's. ne inclination to accept that t of view. Hugh Trevor-Roper the way he did in his admir-oviet autopsy report and those ic has persuaded himself that a Hitler's because he prefers to herefore the cadaver with one uld not belong to his Hitler.²¹² it his own prejudices. He pre-ved Hitler to be a monorchid. was discovered in the death hat, however, is a conjecture. tler's hands were placed; they given Hitler's continual con-abit in moments of tension of nds, it seems likely that in d have folded his hands over d until new discoveries appear ell do—let us accept the evi-on to the problem of how Hitler t not through the mouth. eir deaths, Hitler and his bride s had been prepared for them, antaneous and very sure. That / the autopsy. pistol shot? One of the few sses is that a shot was fired in heard a shot, and gunpowder oom. But why a pistol shot at d available lethal doses of cya-yeche. *He could not trust people* st Heinrich Himmler, the man for this man, "*Der treue Hein-* day, was now a traitor treating if Himmler in his perfidy had would only render the Führer

unconscious—to be handed over by Himmler to the Anglo-Saxons? Hitler was suspicious. He tested one of the vials of poison on his dog. It worked beautifully—but it might not work on him.

It was absolutely crucial that he should die, and that his body be totally consumed—that nothing, absolutely *nothing*, be left to the enemy. It must never happen to him and Eva what the wireless had reported had happened to Mussolini and his mistress: shot, then hanged upside down in a public square to be pelted with filth and invective by a hate-filled crowd. Nor could he stand the thought of his body's being suspended from a meathook, as he himself had exhibited the bodies of German generals in June 1944. Never, *never*, he had screamed, would he go on display as a freak in a Russian circus. He must be very sure indeed that he was dead and his body consumed "without a trace." He could not trust the poison. But who, he had asked, would perform the *coup de grâce*? Who indeed?

Linge, his valet of many years, or Günsche, his personal adjutant, or Bormann were obvious candidates. But there was one thing wrong with all of them: they were members of the SS. And Himmler's SS—which Hitler had once called his Society of Jesus, sworn to absolute fealty to him alone—was now honeycombed with treason. The motto of their belt buckles had become a mockery: "My Honor is My Loyalty." There was, Hitler was now convinced, no honor left in the world, no perfidy he had not suffered.

In the whirling world of his paranoid suspicion, there was only one person he could rely upon to perform this act of cosmic importance, and that was Eva Braun-Hitler. She was a woman of courage who had flown into a doomed city to be with him; she had demonstrated her obedience by fulfilling his every wish and his most unusual sexual demands; she was a sportswoman who knew how to handle pistols. Indeed, she wrote to a close friend on 19 April 1945 that constant pistol practice made her "so good at it that none of the men dared to compete."²¹³ And she had been found seated at Hitler's left side.

But Linge thought Hitler himself had fired the shot which entered his left temple and exited from his right.²¹⁴ He must have been mistaken, for Hitler was not left-handed, and we know that his left hand shook so badly he could not control it. That the larger bullet hole was in the right temple would indicate entrance from the left only if the shot were made an inch or two away from Hitler's skull—as would probably have been the case if Eva Braun-Hitler had shot him. A shot fired with the muzzle pushed tightly against the skull would have produced a gaseous recoil, leaving a large hole at the point of entry and probably pulling portions of the brain out with it.²¹⁵

Cyanide acts quickly but not instantaneously. Hitler probably could have had time to bite the ampule, swallow its contents, put the pistol tightly against his right temple and pull the trigger. But it was said that he was found with his hands resting quietly on his knees—or,

under the direction of Otto Ohlendorf, dealt with Germany and the occupied countries; its counter-
VI which dealt with foreign intelligence. AMT IV, under the direction of Heinrich Mueller, was set up 'to
on to the State'; AMT V, under the direction of
controlled the Criminal Police (Kripo) whose duty was

which Schellenberg was first assigned, had many
Schellenberg, as head of AMT IV E, was entrusted with
work for the Gestapo in Germany and the occupied
1941, at the time of the invasion of Russia, he took
rized AMT VI, the Foreign Intelligence Service.
nmer of 1944, on the liquidation of the Abwehr, the
ice of the German High Command (which, under
and General Oster, had been used as a cover for the
osition to Hitler), Schellenberg assumed the addi-
ity for the German Military Intelligence and so
ition of a unified Foreign Intelligence Service.

was never one of the Nazi leaders. His picture rarely
apers, his name was unfamiliar. He belonged to the
the technicians of dictatorship, and he is the only
ighly important group to have written his memoirs.
Schellenberg was far more interested in describing what
ne than in constructing an apology. He had a gift for
Mueller, Ribbentrop, Kaltenbrunner, Canaris and
are all brought to life and given that touch of
which the fantastic element in their actions and
s unconvincing. None of them made so deep an
Schellenberg as Heydrich and the pages in which he
onship with Heydrich, 'the man with an iron heart',
it in the book.

* * *

of Nazi Germany (as of every dictatorship) were
nce and incessant struggle for power not only be-

7 A 4B was responsible for the rounding up, transporta-
gising to death of at least three million Jews.' Edward
Burnham, London, 1956.

between rival organizations—the Main Security Office, the Foreign
Office, the Propaganda Ministry, the High Command and the Nazi
Party—but also within each organization itself. Schellenberg was
adept at both forms of intrigue, and needed to be if he were to survive.
Since he was constantly in the company and in the confidence of
Heydrich and Himmler, he provides valuable evidence on the steady
engrossing of power by the SS leaders. His worst enemies were to be
found in his own Main Security Office, Kaltenbrunner (Heydrich's
successor) and 'Gestapo' Mueller. Only the continued favour of
Himmler enabled Schellenberg to escape their attempts to destroy him.

Schellenberg's responsibility was the organization of intelligence
work abroad and this meant that he was also in a good position to
follow the course and consequences of Hitler's policy towards the
enemy, towards Germany's allies and the occupied countries. Two
areas with which he was especially concerned were Occupied Russia
and the Far East; in both cases his memoirs add considerably to our
knowledge. He describes in some detail the steps taken to place German
agents behind the Russian lines and to prevent the counter-penetration
of Communist agents into Germany. He saw the opportunities which
were being missed in Russia through Hitler's obstinate adherence to a
policy of indiscriminate brutality, and he provides some interesting
information on Japanese attempts to mediate between Germany and
the Soviet Union. From these doubts sprang his own ambitious scheme
(formed as early as 1942, according to his own account) to bring about
a compromise peace through his influence over Himmler.

On certain subjects Schellenberg maintains a discreet silence. He
barely mentions the concentration camps or the mass-murders of the
Jews, although both were the responsibility of Himmler and the SS.
Nor has he more than a sentence or two about the German opposition
to Hitler and the plot of July 20, 1944, about which he must have
known a good deal if only because of the part the liquidation of the
plot played in his plans to secure control of the Abwehr.

The concluding episode, in which for the only time he tried directly
to influence the course of major events by persuading Himmler to
initiate independent negotiations for peace, is already well known.¹ But

¹ Cf. H. R. Trevor-Roper, *The Last Days of Hitler*, Macmillan, London, 1950; Count Bernadotte, *The Curtain Falls*, Cassell, London, 1945, and *The Kersten Memoirs*, Hutchinson, London, 1956.

1944

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vasion of the Balkans. Obviously Roosevelt's military advisers played a decisive part in this question. The political situation in the Balkans may have seemed too complex and uncertain; also such strategy would favour British interests in South-eastern Europe, and Roosevelt was still continually afraid of a possible Russo-German understanding.

The documents photographed by 'Cicero' showed clearly that a special status was provided for Turkey. There were, unfortunately, no indications about Greece. However, it was quite evident that according to the agreement reached at Teheran, Poland, Hungary, Rumania and Yugoslavia would come under the 'protection' of the Soviet Armies. Stalin even demanded that Poland should become Russian territory as far as the Curzon Line and should receive parts of eastern Germany in compensation. With defeat growing ever more imminent, Germany's ultimate fate could clearly be foreseen.

The study of these documents was quite breath-taking. Our evaluating commentaries were simple and straightforward, and there was no mistaking their meaning. Only Ribbentrop tried to read between the lines, and saw there, as always, continuing tension between Russia and the western Allies—and, of course, found a ready audience in his supreme master.

Hitler reacted as I had expected. He declared that now more than ever before it was necessary to gather all our forces for total war, for total destruction of the enemy by means of a ruthless expenditure of all physical resources.

'Cicero's' reports obviously put Himmler into a state of uncertainty. Shortly before Christmas 1943, he asked me to go to see him. I was reporting on various matters when suddenly he interrupted me: 'Schellenberg, I realize now that something has to happen. Only everything is so terribly difficult——' I could hardly believe my ears when he went on to say, 'For God's sake don't let your contact with Hewitt¹ be broken off. Could you not let him be told that I am ready to have a conversation with him?' 1944

¹ Mr Abram Stevens Hewitt, President Roosevelt's special representative in Stockholm.

May '44 #

From that point on the blows fell in rapid succession. 'Cicero's' documents showed clearly that the continued neutrality of Turkey would be short-lived. Step by step the Turks were going over into the Allied camp. The Turkish diplomats proceeded carefully and according to plan—almost exactly as Knatchbull-Hughessen had described in his dispatches to the Foreign Office. First, there was the continuation of neutrality, but with the concentration of Turkish forces in Thrace to tie down German divisions in Bulgaria. Meanwhile, there were increasing shipments of Allied war material to Turkey, and finally, more and more consultations between the Turkish and Allied General Staffs. According to the documents, this process of wooing the Turks over was to be completed by May 15, 1944, and was in some way connected with Operation 'Overlord'. Therefore, from that date on we had to count on an all-out effort from the West.

Had Churchill been able to carry through his plan for an invasion of the Balkans at the end of 1943, then, according to my calculations at the time, the war would have been over in the spring of 1944. The Balkans were like an overripe plum, ready to fall at the slightest touch, and this would have torn open the German South-eastern flank. Instead, the western Allies inaugurated the bombing by their strategic air arm of important road and railway junctions and oil installations. The first victim, according to the schedule photographed by 'Cicero', was to be Sofia on January 15, 1944. The city was thus forewarned in ample time, though there was nothing much we could do to counter the attack.

About February or March 1944, 'Cicero' stopped his activities, and in April Turkey broke off relations with Germany and went over to the camp of the western Allies.

From the beginning I was convinced that 'Cicero' had worked with one or more accomplices. I never discovered his motives—whether greed, hatred, or just love of adventure—but often during my many journeys my thoughts would turn again to this strange case. Again and again I wondered whether perhaps there lay behind 'Cicero' the shadow of the Turkish Secret Service. The more I thought about this, the more likely it seemed to me that through his material Turkey had tried to warn Germany and prevent her from continuing on her path to total destruction. At the

same time, she would be war
ference of her loyalty to the c
thus be safeguarding herself
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the western Allies. This is an
 e been more in the interests
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to me as a wise and experi-
 n whom I could learn much.
 ige were another chapter,
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 Himmler would nervously
 I say, 'Leave the dossier here
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 of the Wehrmacht, who for
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 ndlight. Himmler regularly
 h new material against him,
 ing opposition.

uch supporter, Keitel, tried
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 that he had taken these steps
 was to blow in Canaris's ser-
 to all departments. But this
 1944 Canaris's personal and
 ted him in Hitler's eyes that

he had been relieved of his post. The official reason was simply
 that the conduct of the war now demanded the creation of a uni-
 fied German Intelligence Service. (It may be recalled that this was
 one of the main points of the programme which I had set myself
 in 1941.)

The inevitable downfall of Canaris came on a Sunday afternoon
 at the beginning of August 1944. I was working in a military
 Secret Service office with several others, when I received a tele-
 phone call from SS Gruppenfuehrer Mueller. He and his chief,
 Kaltenbrunner, had been assigned to carry out the investigation
 into the plot of July 20. (Both of them had their suspicions about
 me and tried to incriminate me with all their cunning.) In a sharp
 voice Mueller ordered me to drive to Canaris's home and inform
 him that he was under arrest—this was an official order from
 Kaltenbrunner. I was to take Canaris to Fuerstenberg in Mecklen-
 burg, and not to return with him to Berlin until everything had
 been cleared up.

I said that I was not an executive officer and would not dream of
 carrying out such an assignment, which was most unwelcome to
 me. 'Furthermore,' I said, 'I shall telephone Himmler at once. This
 is an imposition.'

'You know,' said Mueller, 'that Kaltenbrunner has been put in
 charge of the investigation of July 20—not Himmler! If you
 refuse to comply with the order, which I herewith repeat, you
 will have to suffer the consequences.'

I realized at once what their game was. If I refused to obey they
 would have an excellent excuse for proceeding against me.
 Mueller and Kaltenbrunner, in the abysmal hatred which they
 bore me, had already tried in 1943 to denounce me as a British
 agent in connection with the affair of the lawyer, Dr Langbehn.
 Therefore I had to be on my guard. Without another word to
 Mueller I hung up. After considering what to do, I finally decided
 to comply. I also thought that in this difficult situation I might be
 able to be of some help to Canaris. I told SS Hauptsturmfuehrer
 Baron von Voelkersam about the situation and ordered him to
 accompany me. The Baron had distinguished himself in airborne
 operations in Belgium in 1940 and in the Caucasus in 1943, and he
 had also served under Canaris.

middle '44 #

Himmler. He had known nothing about Kaltenbrunner's move against me. He assured me that he would have an interview with Canaris, and this must have taken place, for there is no other explanation of the fact that Canaris was not sentenced to death until the very last days before the collapse of the Third Reich.

The evidence against him, was certainly sufficient to satisfy the People's Court, under its blood-thirsty President Freisler, of his guilt. In July 1944 two dispatch cases containing incriminating documents had been discovered in a safe in one of Canaris's offices outside Berlin. They supplied final proof of his and his collaborators' guilt. In 1944, however, Himmler was still powerful enough to protect Canaris from the death sentence, and instead he was sent to a concentration camp at Flossenber in Bavaria.

From the middle of 1944 I took over Canaris's Military Intelligence Department, incorporating its various tasks in departments IV and VI of the Counter-Espionage organization.

In March 1945 Hitler and Kaltenbrunner jointly ordered the execution of Canaris.

OPERATION

*Exchange of information from abroad
'Tapping' Britain's communications— Aktion Ber
tact with Roosevelt
assassination— The 1*

I ALWAYS considered the most important time Manpower most brilliant experts, artisans, until its greatly helped in n rank of SS Brigades powers of a division the Waffen SS.

I spent a great deal of co-operation of the various services. Al Thiele, the heads of regularly exchange- so I gave a dinner for the three services, Stations discussed their problems. The single factor responsible technical side of m which these people most of my success

The problem of enemy countries is intelligence service

1944

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fist and looked like a lump of mud. The idea was for it to be attached to Stalin's car. The charge contained a fuse which was controlled by short-wave and was so powerful that very little remained of the car on which we tried it out. The transmitter, which would automatically set off the explosives, was the size of a cigarette box and could send out an ultra-short-wave for a distance of about seven miles.

Two members of the Red Army who had previously been exiled for a long time to Siberia, and one of whom was acquainted with a mechanic in Stalin's garage, accepted the assassination assignment. They were flown in a large transport aircraft at night and dropped near the place where our agents had informed us by short-wave that Stalin had his headquarters. The two men jumped and, as far as we could ascertain, landed at the correct place; but that was the last we ever heard of them, although they both carried short-wave transmitters. I doubt very much whether they attempted to blow up Stalin. I feel it is more likely that they were either picked up soon after they landed, or that they reported their mission to the NKVD.

1944
 Meanwhile the threat of collapse was coming nearer. When Himmler took me with him to report to Hitler in the Fuehrer's headquarters, there was the usual atmosphere of intensive work and excitement. I had not seen Hitler for a long time and was really alarmed by his appearance. His eyes, which before had been so strong and dominating, were listless and tired. His left arm trembled so violently that he was forced to hold it, almost desperately, with his right hand. He tried to hide the ungainliness of his movements. His back was so bent that he appeared hunch-backed. His gait was clumsy and heavy. Only his voice was still as strong and clear as before, but more staccato, his sentences shorter.

He and Himmler were striding up and down the room. They broke off their conversation as soon as I entered, and Hitler sat down for a moment, then turned to Jodl and gave orders concerning the eastern front—the replacement of two divisions in the central sector, and other military matters. Turning to me, he discussed several of my recent intelligence reports: the problems in the Balkans, especially relations between General Mihailovitch and the British, and British relations with Tito. He also wanted to

know more about our intelligence. Then he asked about the eleventh, reported as briefly and concisely.

Suddenly he rose, looked at me with a voice which vibrated angrily. There was a long pause, and he looked accusingly in the air of that moment to show visible signs of uneasiness in two steps. But Hitler followed. 'Remember this one thing, I want no compromise, there can be no compromise. The German people cannot be destroyed. They shall be destroyed.' He said, 'Yes, then they deserve to perish. They will have fallen in battle and the German people will be destroyed.'

I felt that stark insanity struck and any ties which still bound him to his own people, for he was willing to sacrifice his own people. He willed it in a vengeful spite.

I recall another conversation which I was present. Hitler declared that infantry units would be employed. Armoured units composed of tanks, able to withstand all types of attack. Liquid fuel would no longer be used. They would have an operational range of 100 metres without the need for refuelling. New types of incredibly destructive weapons.

Before the launching of the final offensive in 1944 Hitler summoned his staff. He dwelt at length on the 'fight for the East and West' and emphasized the struggle and death struggle. 'If Germany is biologically inferior and will perish. It is the West that forces us to fight. It is the West that will transpire that the winner will

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know more about our intelligence activities in the Near East. Then he asked about the elections in the United States, and I reported as briefly and concisely as possible.

Suddenly he rose, looked at me piercingly, and said in a deep voice which vibrated angrily: 'I read your reports regularly.' There was a long pause, and the words seemed to stand, suspended accusingly in the air of that room. I noticed that Himmler began to show visible signs of uneasiness. Involuntarily I had retreated two steps. But Hitler followed me, and said in the same voice, 'Remember this one thing, Schellenberg: in this war there can be no compromise, there can only be victory or destruction. And if the German people cannot wrest victory from the enemy, then they shall be destroyed.' I shall never forget his concluding words: 'Yes, then they deserve to perish, for the best of Germany's manhood will have fallen in battle. Germany's end will be horrible, and the German people will have deserved it.'

I felt that stark insanity stood there in the middle of the room, and any ties which still bound me to the man fell away at that moment, for he was willing to condemn what was dearest to him, his own people. He willed the destruction of all this to satisfy his vengeful spite.

I recall another conversation between Hitler and Himmler at which I was present. Hitler claimed that by the year 2000, no more infantry units would be employed in warfare: there would be only armoured units composed of one-man tanks. These would be able to withstand all types of weapons, including chemical ones. Liquid fuel would no longer be needed, and the tanks, which would have an operational radius of more than two thousand kilometres without the need for servicing or supplies, would carry new types of incredibly destructive armament.

Before the launching of the great offensive in the Ardennes in 1944 Hitler summoned his army commanders to his headquarters. He dwelt at length on the 'fateful position of Germany as between East and West' and emphasized that this was for Germany a life and death struggle. 'If Germany loses, it will have proved itself biologically inferior and will have forfeited its future existence.' It is the West that forces us to fight to the last. However, it will transpire that the winner will not be the West, but the East.

✱ toward the end - his day dream.

End of '44

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XXXVIII

PEACE FEELERS

Herr Musy's efforts to save Jewish internees—Discussions between Himmler and Herr Musy—Kaltenbrunner frustrates the efforts of the International Red Cross—A message from Count Bernadotte—Himmler consents to a meeting with the Count—Agreement reached on the transference of prisoners—The SS supervise the transfer

WHILE HITLER's fortunes declined rapidly, I had to make frequent and desperate use of my position with Himmler to ensure that at least Swiss neutrality was respected, and I honestly feel that it is largely due to my influence with and through Himmler, which I was never tired of exerting to the utmost, that a 'preventive' occupation of Switzerland did not take place. Needless to say, these purely negative interventions were inevitably linked with my ceaseless attempts to establish direct or indirect peace feelers. My efforts brought on me the wrath of Kaltenbrunner, Bormann and Mueller, who were waiting for just such an excuse to bring about my downfall. They almost succeeded.

A radio message about Dr Langbehn's negotiations with Allied representatives in Switzerland was intercepted, and the fact that Dr Langbehn had my blessing in this completely unofficial undertaking was mentioned, as well as Dr Kersten's part in furthering these negotiations. Kaltenbrunner and Mueller immediately arranged for a secret investigation, but Kersten's influence with Himmler saved me from disaster. Later I was able to repay Dr Kersten by warning him or taking counter-measures whenever Mueller's Gestapo had plans to liquidate him.

It was at this time that my contacts in Switzerland brought me into touch with Herr Musy, a former President of Switzerland. He was an utterly selfless man, highly intelligent and knowledgeable, who had one aim—the saving of as many as possible of the hundreds of thousands of concentration camp inmates. Towards the end of 1944, after weeks of persuasion, I managed to arrange a

secret meeting between Musy and I. I kept the conversation on general, impersonal personality and clever argument. I managed to exert, made Himmler understand, understood, however, that he would not mention Jewish concentration camps, medicines and other things. Musy made a counter-suggestion: I would give himself with payments in foreign currency to the International Red Cross. Himmler's insistence on the saving of thousands of Jews was impossible for Germany's foreign policy; he saw the effect such an action would have on Hitler. I realized during this talk that I had never worked up enough courage to do so. The talk ended with a suggestion recognized by the United States and the Soviet Union: that I would eventually emigrate there, the question with certain Jewish contacts.

Just before Musy left for Switzerland, I proved his sincerity by conceding that a number of prominent Jewish prisoners had been released. Himmler reluctantly agreed, responsible for seeing that the arrangements were made. I asked him to keep in close contact with me after the meeting between them.

I immediately got in touch with Musy to take care of these prisoners, but I was not a member of the Gestapo, so I could not reveal its internal affairs. I asked Musy to contact the officials in charge of the prisoners' food, clothing, and I was able to find out where and get them better food and receive food packages; in some cases civilian clothes and lodgings in the event of emigration. All this required the constant and constant liaison with the Gestapo.

Fall '44

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Discussions between
the efforts of the
Count Bernadotte —
Agreement reached on
the transfer

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secret meeting between Musy and Himmler. At first Himmler kept the conversation on general lines, but at length Musy's forceful personality and clever arguments, together with the pressure I managed to exert, made Himmler come to a decision. He let it be understood, however, that he would only agree to a mass evacuation of Jewish concentration camp inmates in return for tractors, cars, medicines and other things of which we were badly in need. Musy made a counter-suggestion that Himmler should content himself with payments in foreign currency to be credited to the International Red Cross. Himmler could not realize that the freeing of thousands of Jews was important from the point of view of Germany's foreign policy; he seemed only to be concerned with the effect such an action would have on the Party clique and on Hitler. I realized during this talk that he genuinely wanted to free himself from his past record on the Jewish question, but he could never work up enough courage to take the decisive step. This part of the talk ended with a suggestion that Switzerland should be recognized by the United States as a place of transit for Jews who would eventually emigrate there, and Musy promised to discuss the question with certain Jewish organizations in Switzerland.

Just before Musy left for Switzerland I persuaded Himmler to prove his sincerity by conceding one of Musy's special requests: that a number of prominent Jews and Frenchmen should be released. Himmler reluctantly agreed, and asked me to be responsible for seeing that the arrangement was carried out. He also asked me to keep in close contact with Musy and arrange a further meeting between them.

I immediately got in touch with Mueller to get his permission to take care of these prisoners, but he rejected this request, ostensibly because I was not a member of the Gestapo, and therefore he could not reveal its internal affairs to me. However, he did allow me to contact the officials in charge of the various Gestapo establishments, and I was able to find out where the various prisoners were and get them better food and lodging and enable them to receive food packages; in some cases I was also able to get them civilian clothes and lodgings in hotels, and to arrange for their emigration. All this required the unravelling of endless red tape and constant liaison with the Gestapo offices.

Fall
1944

Jan '44

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before Hitler, the puppeteer. Shot, hanged, kicked, splashed by urinating women, the carcasses of Mussolini and his mistress, Clara Petacci, were hung upside down, *pour épater la canaille*, from the beams of a garage on April 28, 1945, near Como.

And von Ribbentrop? Had he believed that the ruined Duce and his false new regime could once more run Italy? Was he delighted to see the end of his old sparring mate, the satyr Count Ciano? The old playboy had been handed over to an Italian tribunal of the new "Republic of Salò," named after the little town on Lake Garda, and executed on January 11, 1944. In his memoirs, von Ribbentrop called Ciano vain and jealous, unreliable and tricky, and careless with the truth. He accused him of betraying his father-in-law. According to von Ribbentrop, Mussolini complained that Ciano had lied to him for years, and von Ribbentrop claimed that Ciano forged his own diaries, which were indeed used against von Ribbentrop during the War Crimes Trials. He specifically referred to an entry in one of the Ciano diaries, October 1, 1939, number XXII, following the Polish campaign. Italy was still reluctant to join the battle. Hitler had pointed out at length that Italy should participate to "satisfy her aspirations" in the Mediterranean. Now von Ribbentrop, according to Ciano, said, "I am of the opinion that in the present circumstances Germany must proceed forthwith to settle the situation by means of force."

Hitler: "Many people think like Ribbentrop. Particularly the Army."

It was Joachim von Ribbentrop's contention that this entry was faked long after its date to cast him as a warmonger.

The bombings of Berlin steadily continued. On a trip to report to Adolf Hitler about events in Turkey, Franz von Papen, then ambassador in Ankara, told how he sat in the cellar under his family's mansion, in Berlin's distinguished Unter den Linden district near the Hotel Esplanade, while bombs fell throughout the night.⁷ The family's house burned above him, and the Wilhelmstrasse was in complete ruins. Everyone fled into the neighboring hotel for the night because the windows and doors in the house were gone. All of Berlin's railroad stations had been smashed, but an occasional train still ran on the few tracks left intact or quickly patched by railway engineers.

The irrepressible and beautiful young Russian Princess "Missy" Vassiltchikov, who lived in Berlin while working for the German Foreign Ministry, gave a vivid picture of life under the bombs. She noted on Tuesday, November 23, 1943, "Last night the greater part of central Berlin was destroyed." Daily there came the curious mixture

Jan '44

felt it was the Foreign Ministry's function, and tried to get the Army in Paris to back him up, but Hitler seemed to side with Goebbels. The Reich's propaganda minister wrote in his diary, "If Ribbentrop is as clever in his foreign policy as he is toward his colleagues in matters of internal politics, I can well understand why we don't achieve any notable success in our dealings with foreign nations."¹² Bombings, the Allied victories, and the threatened invasion all seemed to take second place with Hitler's staff.

A social note about that same time from Chips Channon in London: "Ciano has been shot . . . He was forty-one . . . He was shot on Mussolini's orders, and I find it rather shocking to shoot one's son-in-law."¹³

Beginning with 1944, von Ribbentrop created a "new" Foreign Ministry. Because of the Luther affair, he eliminated Department Deutschland, the liaison with the party. Its duties were taken over by two other departments directly under his control.¹⁴

von Weizsäcker was fired from his post as state secretary and assigned to the Vatican as ambassador. His place as was taken by a nonentity, Baron Adolf Steengracht von Moyland, who had once worked for von Ribbentrop in the embassy in London. Steengracht was weak and inconsequential, but he had an extremely beautiful wife who dressed up many embassy parties. Now he became von Ribbentrop's "parrot," and the sometimes obstreperous von Weizsäcker was safely out of the way. Yet even the most complaisant of Hitler's creatures could at times prove he had a conscience. Steengracht once had added a zero to four hundred, the number of Hungarian Jews permitted to emigrate, thereby saving thirty-six hundred lives.¹⁵

Germany's efforts on the Russian front were shaking, ready to collapse. On January 28, 1944, Hitler ordered all his senior commanders to the Wolfsschanze. A stormy meeting followed in a large, converted barracks.¹⁶ There, Hitler berated the generals as if they were school-boys until his greatest commander, Marshal Erich von Manstein, interrupted him. Hitler had melodramatically spoken of "fighting on alone, surrounded by only a few of his generals who remain loyal." Now a furious von Manstein yelled, "You're right, my Führer! That's exactly the way it will happen!" as if to emphasize that the Führer would certainly be alone unless he stopped interfering. On March 30, 1944, one of Hitler's four-engined Condors landed near Lemberg, the southern headquarters of the Russian front, to bring Marshals von Manstein and Ewald von Kleist to the Berghof, where they were

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Probably the key error was depending on Adolf Hitler's death as the central element and having no Army units at hand loyal to the plotters; these could have breached the many concentric rings of SS guards at the Wolfsschanze and taken charge. The entire machinery of the revolt faltered the moment it became clear that Hitler had survived. The SS kept him safe, and there was no alternative plan to take over his headquarters and arrest his close henchmen. Hitler at bay, like Mussolini, might have been as impotent as Hitler dead; probably more so.

Yet the average German was still slavishly devoted to him and had been taught to link the defense of Germany against disaster with a paradoxical adoration for their Führer, the man who brought them to the edge of doom. They clutched the person of Adolf Hitler as their shield against the vengeance of the advancing Soviets. He would still save them.

On July 21 the revolt was finished. By daybreak, von Stauffenberg and his immediate associates were dead. They were shot in the courtyard of Army headquarters in the Bendlerstrasse in Berlin. The firing squad's targets were illuminated by the headlights of Army cars. Above the crash of rifles came Stauffenberg's shout: "God save our holy Germany!" In his office, General Beck tried to kill himself but failed. He only wounded himself, and was shot there and then by a sergeant.

Today, that street is called Stauffenberg Strasse, and the men of the resistance are national heroes to all but a handful of ultraconservatives. As many as two hundred others were to die barbarically, strangled by ropes while being hoisted on meat hooks fastened to beams of the execution hall at Plötzensee prison. Camera crews sent by Goebbels to film the execution for the Führer were sickened and had to abandon their task. Today the brick-walled building is a national shrine.

About eleven thousand others were arrested by the Gestapo and SD as co-conspirators or simply because they were relatives. Vengeance and cruelty continued even as the Allies' guns could be heard nearby. Among those executed were twenty-one generals, thirty-three colonels, two ambassadors, seven senior diplomats, one minister of state, three secretaries of state. In 1944, 5764 were arrested; in 1945, another 5684.

At the Wolfsschanze on that fateful July 20, a shaky and stunned Hitler found his right arm temporarily out of action, one eardrum shattered, his legs singed. But he was alive. Some of his aides were

badly wounded and near death. His valet helped him dress in a clean uniform to go to the small nearby terminal, where the puppet Mussolini was arriving by train. Hitler reached out with his left hand to shake the shocked Duce's right hand and conducted him on a tour of the devastated scene of the act, as if to prove that the fates had made him immortal. During tea at 5 P.M., Mussolini was witness to the scene of Admiral Dönitz, head of the Navy, attacking Göring for the Luftwaffe's failures. Then the fat Reichsmarschall blasted von Ribbentrop for his disastrous foreign policy and almost struck him with a raised marshal's baton. Göring screamed, "Ribbentrop, you lousy little champagne peddler!" Von Ribbentrop shouted back, "I am still the Reich's foreign minister and my name is *von* Ribbentrop."²² Mussolini was embarrassed. Hitler was not listening. He was deep in his own thoughts, sucking lozenges, his ears stuffed with cotton wool. He paid no attention to his squabbling henchmen or to his Italian guest until someone mentioned Röhm and his treason. Then Hitler came furiously to life. He yelled for bloody revenge on the conspirators, their wives, relatives, and children. He used his very survival as proof, to himself, to his subordinates, to every last German in the armed forces or civilian life, that he was fated to lead Germany. The fact that he had survived proved that God, whose name he used only on momentous occasions, had chosen him for the task.

The German people believed him. They suffered more bombs and fought on. Hitler's survival also stiffened the resolve of the SS, men who had "steeled" themselves to do the business that "had to be done by those of courage" in the concentration camps and the killing camps.

Joachim von Ribbentrop also seemed reinforced by "judgment of God and the proof of His benevolence to Germany's Führer." Oddly, the man whom the conspirators had planned on as the future chancellor, Carl Friedrich Goerdeler, had been against assassination; he too called Hitler's survival "the judgment of God."

The question is often asked why the German resistance movement was so belated and why Germany's leading classes originally endorsed Hitler's anti-Semitism. Many titled and *haute bourgeois* Germans were anti-Semitic in the old-fashioned, conservative "social" way. In this respect, they did not differ from their British, French, or even American contemporaries. "One invited" only a few Jews. "One married" them only if one could explain that they were the wealthy daughters of titled Jewish banking families. Hitler's early anti-Semitism fell on sympathetic ears among many in Germany's upper classes who accepted anti-Semitism as a *specific* manifestation, not as a

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symbolic one. They could not or would not see that the attack on Jews was a signal of impending attacks on everyone who differed from the National Socialist standard — Catholics, Masons, artists, millionaires, eccentrics, cynics, homosexuals, derelicts, avant-gardists, recluses.

Pastor Niemöller is said to have confessed, "When they came to arrest the Jews, I said nothing. I was not Jewish. When they came to arrest the Catholics, I said nothing. I was not Catholic. When they came to arrest the Communists, I said nothing. I was not Communist. When they came to arrest me, I had nothing left to say."

The German "gap" seemed to be that missing link of protective reaction to be found in (often anti-Semitic) upper-class Britain, which nevertheless allowed a Jew to take his oath in Parliament wearing his hat and without reference to Jesus, which appointed a Jewish (by descent) prime minister and a Jewish viceroy of India. These appointments were too important to be discounted as mere tokens. The British seem to have a built-in alarm system that rings whenever there is a genuine threat to individual liberty. It had been part of British thinking since Runnymede. Americans, who certainly have their problems with racial prejudice, react with supernatural speed to any attack on personal liberties. For every hundred admitted offenses against citizenship and decency there are a thousand instant protests.

The French, as anti-Semitic if not more so than the Germans, also had a Jewish prime minister and, before him, Émile Zola and *J'accuse* and the redress of the brutal treatment of Captain Dreyfus, and before Zola, Voltaire and Rousseau.

Why had Germany's upper classes not developed this quick awareness of *wrong to one, wrong to all*? Once they did recognize the evil, their courage was immense, but belated.

The Hitler of old would never be again. From July 20, 1944, onward he was a sick man, unsure of his step, slower of speech and reaction, and more deeply in thrall to the treatments of Dr. Theo Morell, the man who had revived the tired, ill President Hacha of Czechoslovakia in 1938 in Berlin when Göring frantically called for a doctor. Morell, who began his career as a young ship's doctor, had set up practice in Berlin. An expert in the use of injected stimulants and sedatives, he soon developed a large circle of famous patients, much like the so-called Dr. Feelgoods of New York in the sixties. Hoffmann, who was Hitler's photographer, originally introduced Morell to Hitler in 1936, when the Führer, fearing he had stomach cancer, was suffering only psychosomatic cramps. He became one of Morell's most devoted patients. Karl Brandt, another Hitler doctor (sentenced to

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Introduction 5 A

Professor Schramm was not in Germany to witness Hindenburg's betrayal of his supporters when he appointed none other than his defeated Nazi opponent to the chancellorship. At the beginning of 1933 Schramm had gone to Princeton University on a fellowship, returning to Göttingen later the same year. He continued his teaching and medieval studies undisturbed until the war, when, as a reserve officer, he was called to active service. Given staff assignments in which he invariably was charged with the additional duty of keeping the unit war diary, Schramm was ordered to Hitler's headquarters in 1943 to keep the official diary of the High Command of the Wehrmacht. Understandably the professional soldiers of the German General Staff wished to entrust this responsibility to a professional historian.

Until replaced by Schramm in 1943, Helmuth Greiner, originally from the Reich Archives, had kept the diary. But he was neither a party man nor a regular officer, so he was vulnerable. Using a petty conflict with a minor Nazi official as a pretext, the head of the Party Chancellery, Martin Bormann, was able to prevail upon Hitler to transfer Greiner into the field. The generals had every reason to be disturbed by this action, surmising that Bormann had moved against Greiner so as to free his position for a militant Nazi.

The generals had a vested interest in the scrupulous objectivity of the historical record. Few, if any, could foresee in any detail what was to come. But they had already experienced serious conflicts with Hitler, whom they did *not* venerate as "the greatest warlord of all times." As hardheaded professionals, they knew the record would bear them out if it were kept by a professional rather than a party hack. So when Greiner, a reputable military historian tailored to their tastes, was forced out, they were desperate to find the right sort of replacement quickly. Fortunately, a colonel on the Operations Staff remembered Schramm, at whose home he had been a guest while on garrison duty in Göttingen before the war. With an alacrity unusual even in German military practice, the assignment was made, effective January 1, 1943.

Things went smoothly enough for Schramm until 1944, when his sister-in-law was executed for opposition to the Nazi regime. At about the same time, formal allegations of his own unreliability were

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A 6 *Hitler: The Man and the Military Leader*

transmitted to the Führer Headquarters from Göttingen by Himmler's security service. Fortunately Schramm's superior officer, General Alfred Jodl, disregarded these charges, so that he was allowed to retain his position to the very end. This meant that he was able, in defiance of Hitler's destruction order, to save copies or drafts of the greater part of the official diary covering the years 1943-1945. His predecessor, Greiner, meanwhile had secretly hidden copies of his drafts covering the first years of the war. Thus it was possible for Schramm, in association with Professors Hans-Adolf Jacobsen (Bonn), Andreas Hillgruber (Freiburg), and Walther Hubatsch (Bonn), three of his former students, to reconstruct and publish this extraordinary document as a whole. Comprising well over six thousand printed pages, the *War Diary of the High Command* is an absolutely unique historical record. No such compilation from the highest echelon is available on the history of the war as waged by the United States, the United Kingdom, or, for that matter, any other major power.

The first of the two essays in this volume, "The Anatomy of a Dictator," is based primarily on the record of Hitler's own self-revealing statements made during and after meals at his headquarters on the Russian Front from July 1941 through July 1942. This information is frequently supplemented by insights Schramm gained while in the Führer Headquarters from the beginning of 1943 until the end of the war, as well as by what he was able to learn during postwar internment from persons who had been very close to Hitler. Schramm himself never conversed with Hitler and on only a few occasions was he in a position to observe him for an extended time. He was, however, in daily contact with officers directly under Hitler's influence, and immediately after the war he was able to confer at length with two of Hitler's personal physicians as well as his dentist.

The picture of Hitler which flows from Schramm's skillful pen is worlds removed from the widely known caricature of a petty little street-corner agitator with a Charlie Chaplin moustache. A certain sinister pettiness is there, to be sure, and it is more specifically documented than ever before. But this is not the point. In "The Anatomy of a Dictator," the awkwardly woven veil of uneasy familiarity, insecure contempt, and feigned amusement, which for so long has

1942 Das gibt es nicht für mich
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exist." And he repeated, almost screaming: "It does not exist for me!" Thereupon he informed the Minister of Transportation that he had appointed the former Reichsbahn inspector the new state secretary in the Ministry of Transportation—an embarrassing situation for the Minister, for the state secretary, and for me as well.

Hitler had always spoken with great respect of Dormmüller's expertise. In view of that Dormmüller could have expected that the question of his deputy would first be discussed with him. But apparently Hitler (as was so often the case when he confronted experts) wanted to avoid an awkward argument by presenting the Minister of Transportation with a *fait accompli*. And in fact Dormmüller took this humiliation in silence.

Hitler now turned to Field Marshal Milch and me and instructed us to act temporarily as transportation dictators. We were to see to it that the requirements were "met to the largest extent and in the fastest time." With the disarming comment, "We cannot allow the war to be lost because of the transportation question; therefore it can be solved!"²⁰ Hitler adjourned the meeting.

In fact it was solved. The young state secretary found procedures for handling the backup of trains. He speeded traffic and was able to provide for the increased transportation needs of the war plants. A special committee for rolling stock took charge of the locomotives damaged by the Russian winter; repair techniques were much accelerated. Instead of the previous craft system of manufacturing locomotives, we went over to assembly-line methods and increased production many fold.²¹ In spite of the steadily rising demands of the war, traffic continued to flow in the future, or at least until the systematic air raids of the fall of 1944 once again throttled traffic and made transportation, this time for good, the greatest bottleneck in our war economy.

When Goering heard that we intended to increase production of locomotives many times over, he summoned me to Karinhall. He had a suggestion to offer, which was that we build locomotives out of concrete, since we did not have enough steel available. Of course the concrete locomotives would not last as long as steel ones, he said; but to make up for that we would simply have to produce more of them. Quite how that was to be accomplished, he did not know; nevertheless, he clung for months to this weird idea for the sake of which I had squandered a two-hour drive and two hours of waiting time. And

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I had come home on an empty stomach. Hitler seldom offered a meal. The household made to the needs.

A week after Ganzemühl words had been spoken on 1 visited Hitler once more. In times the leadership must see that the use of private railcars be discontinued for the of Hitler himself when I saw private cars were a necessity housing conditions. I correct used in the east, I said, but with a long list of the prominent.²²

I met regularly for lunch *chambre séparée* at Horcher these meetings, at the end of chance of winning the war: new effects. He said he had were on the track of a weapon perhaps throw the island of Elbe that we pay a joint visit to it he said, at least to have spoken.

Dr. Albert Vögler, head of president of the Kaiser Wilhelm at this time to the neglected field of the inadequate support from the Ministry of Education and much influence during wartime situation with Hitler and proposals of the Reich Research Council. A month later, on June 9, 1944.

Around the same time the meetings production, Milch, Fromm, the Berlin center be briefed on the subject of scientists whose names I no longer

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luxuriously furnished dining hall in the Chancellery, this dining room looked rather like the railroad station restaurant in a small town. Pine boarding formed the walls, and the windows were those of a standardized barracks. There was a long table for about twenty persons, flanked by plain chairs. Hitler's seat was on the window side in the middle of the long table; Keitel sat facing him, while the places of honor on either side of Hitler were reserved for the ever-changing visitors. As in past days in Berlin, Hitler talked long-windedly about his favorite subjects, while his dinner guests were reduced to silent listeners. It was apparent, however, that Hitler made an effort in the presence of these men, with whom he was not especially intimate and who moreover were his superiors by birth and education, to present his thoughts in as impressive a manner as possible.* Thus the level of the table talk in the Fuehrer's headquarters differed from that at the Chancellery. It was considerably higher.

During the first weeks of the offensive we had discussed the rapid progress of the troops in the South Russian plains in an exultant mood. By contrast, after two months the faces of the diners grew increasingly doleful, and Hitler too began to lose his self-assurance.

Our troops had, it is true, taken the oil fields of Maikop. The leading tank columns were already fighting along the Terek and pushing on, over a roadless steppe near Astrakhan toward the southern Volga. But this advance was no longer maintaining the pace of the first weeks. Supplies could no longer keep up; the spare parts the tanks carried with them had long since been consumed, so that the fighting wedge was steadily thinning out. Moreover, our monthly armaments production lagged far behind the demands of an offensive over such enormous spaces. At that time we were manufacturing only a third of the tanks and a fourth of the artillery we were to be producing in 1944. Aside from that, normal wear and tear was extremely high over such distances. The tank testing station at Kummersdorf operated on the assumption that the treads or the motor of a heavy tank would need repairs after four to five hundred miles.

* *Tischgespräche* (Table Talk) published by Picker gives a good idea of Hitler's topics of conversation. But we must remember that this collection includes only those passages in Hitler's monologues—they took up one to two hours every day—which struck Picker as significant. Complete transcripts would reinforce the sense of stifling boredom.

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Hitler realized no to offer any resistance thrust on to the so therefore detached wedge and directed These contingents narrow coastal road delivered; he assumed fall easily to him in

But the units we however imperious Hitler was shown outside Sochi. Chief could easily render blasting the steep narrow for the advance impressed:

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Even a layman himself into the ground German mountain thousand feet high, rounded by broad flag there. To be the smallest scale,*

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Hitler realized none of this. With the enemy supposedly too weak to offer any resistance, he wanted the exhausted German troops to thrust on to the southern side of the Caucasus, toward Georgia. He therefore detached considerable forces from the already weakened wedge and directed them to advance beyond Maikop toward Sochi. These contingents were supposed to reach Sukhumi by way of the narrow coastal road. This was where the main blow was to be delivered; he assumed that the territory north of the Caucasus would fall easily to him in any case.

But the units were done in. They could no longer push forward, however imperiously Hitler ordered it. In the situation conferences Hitler was shown aerial photos of the impenetrable walnut forests outside Sochi. Chief of Staff Halder warned Hitler that the Russians could easily render the coastal road impassable for a long time by blasting the steep slopes. In any case, he argued, the road was too narrow for the advance of large troop units. But Hitler remained unimpressed:

These difficulties can be overcome as all difficulties can be overcome! First we must conquer the road. Then the way is open to the plains south of the Caucasus. There we can deploy our armies freely and set up supply camps. Then, in one or two years, we'll start an offensive into the underbelly of the British Empire. With a minimum of effort we can liberate Persia and Iraq. The Indians will hail our divisions enthusiastically.

When in 1944 we were combing through the printing trade for unnecessary assignments, we came upon a plant in Leipzig that was turning out Persian maps and language guides for the OKW in large quantities. The contract had been let and then forgotten.

Even a layman like myself could tell that the offensive had run itself into the ground. Then the report arrived that a detachment of German mountain troops had taken Mount Elbrus, nearly nineteen thousand feet high, the highest mountain in the Caucasus and surrounded by broad fields of glaciers. They had planted the German war flag there. To be sure, this was a superfluous action, certainly on the smallest scale,* which could be understood only as an adventure

* One mountain division tried to push through to Tiflis by way of the Cau-

*stifled them with valentia
portion of boredom.*

1943-4

him. Perhaps Keitel embodied most precisely the type of person Hitler needed in his entourage.

General Jodl, too, rarely contradicted Hitler openly. He proceeded diplomatically. Usually he did not express his thoughts at once, thus skirting difficult situations. Later he would persuade Hitler to yield, or even to reverse decisions already taken. His occasional deprecatory remarks about Hitler showed that he had preserved a relatively unbiased view.

Keitel's subordinates, such as, for example, his deputy General Warlimont, could not be more courageous than their superior; for Keitel would not stand up for them against Hitler's ire. Occasionally they tried to counter the effects of obviously absurd orders by adding little clauses that Hitler did not understand. Under the leadership of a man so submissive and irresolute as Keitel, the High Command often had to look for all sorts of crooked paths in order to arrive at its goals.

The subjugation of the generals might also be laid in part to their state of permanent fatigue. Hitler's work routine intersected the normal daily routine of the High Command. As a result, the generals often went without regular sleep. Such purely physical strains probably affect events more than is generally assumed, especially when high performance over a protracted span of time is required. In private associations, too, Keitel and Jodl gave the impression of being exhausted, burned out. In order to break through this ring of hollow men, I hoped to place—in addition to Fromm—my friend Field Marshal Milch within the Fuehrer's headquarters. I had taken him with me to headquarters several times, supposedly in order to report on activities of Central Planning. A few times all went well, and Milch was gaining ground with his plan of concentrating on a fighter-plane program instead of the proposed fleet of big bombers. But then Goering forbade him to pay any further visits to headquarters.

Goering too gave the impression of a worn-out man at the end of 1942, when I sat with him in the pavilion that had been built especially for his brief stays at headquarters. Goering still had comfortable chairs, not the spartan furnishings of Hitler's bunker office. Depressed, the Reich Marshal said: "We will have reason to be glad if Germany can keep the boundaries of 1933 after the war." He quickly tried to cover up this remark by adding a few confident banalities, but I had the impression that in spite of the bluntness he put on, he saw defeat coming closer.

4 That is the worst. With our character and dedication and depth of feeling it is bound to be better than that.

After his arrival withdrew to his pavilion, his liaison officer in order to brief Goering on disputed questions. In a situation conference, I advocated exactly the opposite of his entourage: "You see my opinion as I do."

On the afternoon of my arrival in Munich in his special train to draw Hitler into the general armaments conference, radio, teletype machine, and members of the General Staff.

The atmosphere was tense at every sizable station. The telephone cable was cut, and the latest reports of transports, accompanied through the Strait of Calcutta.

In earlier years Hitler had a window of his special train with the outside shades on the station. One evening we sat with the table elegantly set with flowers and arrangements. I first saw that a freight train, the cattle car bedragged with German soldiers, just retarded a start, Hitler noticed. Without as much as a word, he emptorily ordered his second half of the train to ordinary front-line soldiers.

At every station all

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by a group of enthusiastic mountain climbers. All of us could sympathize with the impulse behind this act, but otherwise it seemed to us completely unimportant. I often saw Hitler furious but seldom did his anger erupt from him as it did when this report came in. For hours he raged as if his entire plan of campaign had been ruined by this bit of sport. Days later he went on railing to all and sundry about "these crazy mountain climbers" who "belong before a court-martial." There they were pursuing their idiotic hobbies in the midst of a war, he exclaimed indignantly, occupying an idiotic peak even though he had commanded that all efforts must be concentrated upon Sukhumi. Here was a clear example of the way his orders were being obeyed.

Urgent business called me back to Berlin. A few days later the commander of the army group operating in the Caucasus was relieved, although Jodl vigorously defended him. When I returned to headquarters again about two weeks later, I found that Hitler had quarreled with Keitel, Jodl, and Halder. He refused to shake hands with them or to dine with them at the common table. From then on until the end of the war he had his meals served in his bunker room, only occasionally inviting a few select persons to join him. The close relations that Hitler had with his military associates were shattered for good.

Was the cause merely the failure of the offensive on which he had placed so many hopes, or did he for the first time have an inkling that this was the turning point? The fact that from then on he stayed away from the officers' table may have been due to the fact that he would no longer be sitting among them as the invincible leader in peace and war, but as a man whose plans had come to grief. Moreover, he must by now have run through the stock of general ideas with which he had regaled this group. Perhaps he also felt that his magic was failing him for the first time.

For several weeks Keitel skulked about mournfully and displayed great devotion, so that Hitler soon began treating him somewhat more amicably. His relations with Jodl—who had characteristically remained impassive through it all—likewise straightened out. But General

casian mountain passes, following the old military road from Grozny. Hitler considered this road a poor one to use for sending reinforcements, since it was blocked for months at a time by snow and avalanches. One group from the mountain division had gone off to take Mount Elbrus.

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Halder, the army chief of staff, was the man who was probably given to indepen-
dence and thus gave a rather different kind of Chief of Staff. Hitler was fond of saying that he energetically sees to it that his orders are obeyed. He probably did not picture Zeitzler had up to the hierarchy; he was pro-

After the appointment of me—the only civilian in the military conferences. I continued to work with me—for which rising production figures had been shown me if he had been in my presence because of the storm had calmed down.

Every day around noon. It lasted two to three hours. I sat on a plain armchair around the map table: the Army General Staff, the navy, the Waffen-SS, the young men with colonel or major. Keitel, Goebbels, sometimes Goering, and perhaps in the upholstered stool brought beside Hitler.

Desk lamps with their shades turned toward the eastern theater was together, each of them

* Several months passed before I was able to attend.

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1944

irritably called the dog back. But still the dog remained the only living creature at headquarters who aroused any flicker of human feeling in Hitler. Only—the dog was mute.

Hitler's deep estrangement from people proceeded slowly, almost imperceptibly. From about the autumn of 1943 on, he used to make one remark which was all too revealing of his unhappy isolation: "Speer, one of these days I'll have only two friends left, Fräulein Braun and my dog." His tone was so misanthropic, and the remark seemed to be wrung from such depths that it would not have done for me to assure him of my own loyalty. That was the one and only prediction of Hitler's that proved to be absolutely right. But that those two remained true to him was certainly no credit to Hitler, but rather to the staunchness of his mistress and the dependency of his dog.

Later, in my many years of imprisonment, I discovered what it meant to live under great psychological pressure. Only then did I realize that Hitler's life had borne a great resemblance to that of a prisoner. His bunker, although it did not yet have the tomblike proportions it was to assume in July 1944, had the thick walls and ceilings of a prison. Iron doors and iron shutters guarded the few openings, and even his meager walks within the barbed wire brought him no more fresh air and contact with nature than a prisoner's endless tramp around the prison yard.

Hitler's hour came when the main situation conference began after lunch, around two o'clock. Outwardly, the scene had not changed since the spring of 1942. Almost the same generals and adjutants gathered around the big map table. Only now all the participants seemed to have been aged and worn by the events of the past year and a half. Indifferent and rather resigned, they received his watchwords and commands.

Positive aspects were played up. From the testimony of prisoners and special reports from the Russian front, it might appear that the enemy would soon be exhausted. The Russian casualties seemed to be much higher than ours because of their offensives—higher even in proportion to the relative sizes of our populations. Reports of insignificant successes loomed larger and larger in the course of these discussions, until they had become for Hitler incontrovertible evidence that Germany would after all be able to delay the Soviet on-

slaught until the Russians had believed that Hitler would

To forecast what we might prepared a report to Hitler. real job as chief of the Arme had more and more taken on arguments based on calculation was still speaking scornfully of which had rated the Soviet was irate over this memorandum had forbidden Thomas and studies of this type. When aboard, in an earnest effort to its decisions, worked out a capacities, we received a reprint transmit such documents to the

Thus, Jodl knew that there from delivering his report. He colonel named Christian to give of the situation conferences. advantage of being married to who belonged to the nightly the enemy's possible long-run quences would be for us. But tian's showing a completely large maps of Europe, I no attempt. In any case, it failed

Without much fuss, and without concerned, Hitler continued to disregard of any technical situation and logistical calculation group which would examine of their effectiveness and possible headquarters staffs were more functions of modern warfare; activate them. To be sure, the partial aspects of situations; but be born solely in his head, his associates had, therefore, mere

* Air jealousy of human beings

Winkr '41-42

July 26, 1944

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minor aspects of it were learned from the eastern ally repressed. Decisions

under the tremendous was more welcome than need of a decision and for failure. Only rarely staff applying for front-conflicts of conscience To this day the whole of a great deal of criticism across our reservations. In the stupefying moved by what Hitler's were fighting and dying. ves in emergencies that d off a retreat proposed

o to the front regularly. o moreover decided on o so. If he were too ill, ; if he were fearful for lief of the army.

shown him and his staff much blood. But Hitler ad the army from their enter and its road con- had to live in holes in quipped, exhausted and been shattered. At the up to full strength, and e pushed about on the n previous fighting and r, Hitler frequently set since he invariably ornaments came under fire power to bear. The result

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under I

was that the men were led piecemeal up to the enemy and slowly annihilated.

The communications apparatus at headquarters was remarkable for that period. It was possible to communicate directly with all the important theaters of war. But Hitler overestimated the merits of the telephone, radio, and teletype. For thanks to this apparatus the responsible army commanders were robbed of every chance for independent action, in contrast to earlier wars. Hitler was constantly intervening on their sectors of the front. Because of this communications apparatus individual divisions in all the theaters of war could be directed from Hitler's table in the situation room. The more fearful the situation, the greater was the gulf modern technology created between reality and the fantasies with which the man at this table operated.

Military leadership is primarily a matter of intelligence, tenacity, and iron nerves. Hitler thought he had all these qualities in far greater measure than his generals. Again and again he predicted, although only after the disaster of the winter of 1941-42, that even the worst situations could be overcome and, indeed, that only in such situations would he prove how firmly he stood and how sound his nerves were.*

Such remarks were scarcely complimentary toward the officers present; but Hitler was often capable of turning to the General Staff officers of his entourage and insulting them directly. He would tell them that they were not steadfast, that they were always wanting to retreat, that they were prepared to give up ground without any reason. These cowards on the General Staff would never have dared to start a war, he would say; they had always advised against it, always maintained that our forces were far too weak. But who had been proved right, if not himself! He would run down the usual list of earlier military successes and review the negative attitudes of the General Staff before these operations began—which produced a ghostly impression, given the situation that had meanwhile arisen. In going over the past

6 days after the assassination attempt
* On July 26, 1944, Hitler boasted to the heads of industry: "All I know is that unprecedentedly strong nerves and unprecedented resolution are necessary if a leader is to survive in times such as these and make decisions which concern our very existence. . . . Any other man in my place would have been unable to do what I have done; his nerves would not have been strong enough."

July 1944

that way he might lose his temper, flush deeply, and in a rapid, loud voice breaking with excitement burst out: "They aren't only notorious cowards, they're dishonest as well. They're notorious liars! The training of the General Staff is a school of lying and deception. Zeitzler, these figures are false! You yourself are being lied to. Believe me, the situation is deliberately being represented as unfavorable. That's how they want to force me to authorize retreats!"

Invariably, Hitler ordered the bends in the front to be held at all costs, and just as invariably the Soviet forces would overrun the position after a few days or weeks. Then there followed new rages, mingled with fresh denunciations of the officers and, frequently, complaints against the German soldiers: "The soldier of the First World War was much tougher. Think of all they had to go through, in Verdun, on the Somme. Today, they would run away from that kind of thing."

A good many of the officers who came in for these tongue-lashings later joined the July 20, 1944, conspiracy against Hitler. That plot cast its shadow before. In the past Hitler had had a fine sense of discrimination and was able to adapt his language to the people around him. Now he was unrestrained and reckless. His speech became an overflowing torrent like that of a prisoner who betrays dangerous secrets even to his prosecutor. In his talk Hitler seemed to me to be obeying an obsession.

In order to supply evidence for posterity that he had always issued the right orders, as early as the late autumn of 1942, Hitler sent for certified stenographers from the Reichstag who from then on sat at the table during the situation conference and took down every word.

Sometimes, when Hitler thought he had found the way out of a dilemma, he would add: "Have you got that? Yes, someday people will see that I was right. But these idiotic General Staff officers refuse to believe me." Even when the troops were retreating, he would declare triumphantly: "Didn't I order so and so three days ago? Again my order hasn't been carried out. They don't carry out my orders and afterward they lie and blame the Russians. They lie when they say the Russians prevented them from carrying out the order." Hitler refused to admit that his failures were due to the weak position into which he had cast us by insisting on a war on many fronts.

Only a few months before, the stenographers who unexpectedly

found themselves in this mac as a superior genius, just as were forced to catch a glimpse distinctly as they sat writing, sal back and forth at headquarter me like envoys from the pop the tragedy from front-row sea

At the beginning of the war that the Slavs were subhuman, play. But the longer the war l respect. He was impressed by cepted their early defeats. He stressing the parallels to his over Moscow in the winter of ent predicament. In a brief a with a jesting tone of voice t Russia, to entrust the admini German hegemony, of course, to handle the Russians. In gen league. When Stalin's son wa spect, perhaps, that Hitler or treatment. Much had changed France when Hitler predicted be child's play.

In contrast to his ultimate formidable enemy in the east, ceived opinion that the troop fighting material. Even the Al not shake his belief that these serious onslaught. He was c nation. As late as the summer the ground that had been loquered. His opinions on the W considered Churchill, as he o ences, an incompetent, alcoh seriousness that Roosevelt wa of syphilitic paralysis and w

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found themselves in this madhouse had probably envisioned Hitler as a superior genius, just as Goebbels had taught them. Here they were forced to catch a glimpse of the reality. I can still see them distinctly as they sat writing, sallow-faced, or in their free time pacing back and forth at headquarters with a downcast air. They seemed to me like envoys from the populace who were condemned to witness the tragedy from front-row seats.

At the beginning of the war in the east, Hitler, captive to his theory that the Slavs were subhuman, had called the war against them child's play. But the longer the war lasted, the more the Russians gained his respect. He was impressed by the stoicism with which they had accepted their early defeats. He spoke admiringly of Stalin, particularly stressing the parallels to his own endurance. The danger that hung over Moscow in the winter of 1941 struck him as similar to his present predicament. In a brief access of confidence,⁵ he might remark with a jesting tone of voice that it would be best, after victory over Russia, to entrust the administration of the country to Stalin, under German hegemony, of course, since he was the best imaginable man to handle the Russians. In general he regarded Stalin as a kind of colleague. When Stalin's son was taken prisoner it was out of this respect, perhaps, that Hitler ordered him to be given especially good treatment. Much had changed since that day after the armistice with France when Hitler predicted that a war with the Soviet Union would be child's play.

In contrast to his ultimate realization that he was dealing with a formidable enemy in the east, Hitler clung to the end to his preconceived opinion that the troops of the Western countries were poor fighting material. Even the Allied successes in Africa and Italy could not shake his belief that these soldiers would run away from the first serious onslaught. He was convinced that democracy enfeebled a nation. As late as the summer of 1944 he held to his theory that all the ground that had been lost in the West would be quickly reconquered. His opinions on the Western statesmen had a similar bias. He considered Churchill, as he often stated during the situation conferences, an incompetent, alcoholic demagogue. And he asserted in all seriousness that Roosevelt was not a victim of infantile paralysis but of syphilitic paralysis and was therefore mentally unsound. These

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supply for the restricted factories. Boastfully, he replied that this would not cause any problems. I then attempted to settle the priorities and to extract some kind of pledge from Sauckel to transport workers to Germany only after the supply for the restricted factories had been guaranteed. Sauckel also consented to this with a wave of his hand. But Hitler promptly intervened: "What more do you want, Herr Speer? Isn't it enough if Party Comrade Sauckel assures you that? Your mind should be at ease about French industry."

Further discussion would only have strengthened Sauckel's position. The conference was over; Hitler became more cordial again and exchanged a few friendly words, even with me. But that was the end of it. Nevertheless, Sauckel's deportations never got started. That had little to do with my efforts to block him through my French offices and with the collusion of the army authorities.¹⁸ Loss of authority in the occupied areas, the spreading rule of the maquis, and the growing reluctance of the German occupation administrators to increase their difficulties, prevented the execution of all these plans.

The outcome of the conference at the Fuehrer's headquarters had consequences only for me personally. From Hitler's treatment of me, it was clear to everyone that I was in disfavor. The victor in the struggle between Sauckel and me had been Bormann. From now on we had to deal with, at first covert, but soon with more and more overt, attacks upon my aides from industry. More and more frequently I had to defend them at the party secretariat against suspicions or even intervene with the secret police to protect them.¹⁹

Even the last scintillating assembly of the prominent leaders of the Reich could scarcely distract me from my cares. That was the gala celebration of Goering's birthday on January 12, 1944, which he held at Karinhall. We all came with expensive presents, such as Goering expected: cigars from Holland, gold bars from the Balkans, valuable paintings and sculptures. Goering had let me know that he would like to have a marble bust of Hitler, more than life size, by Breker. The overlaid gift table had been set up in the big library. Goering displayed it to his guests and spread out on it the building plans his architect had prepared for his birthday. Goering's palace-like residence was to be more than doubled in size.

At the magnificently set table in the luxurious dining room flunkies in white livery served a somewhat austere meal, in keeping with the conditions of the time. Funk, as he did every year, delivered the birth-

day speech at the banquet and dignities and offered presents." Funk's extravagant actual situation. The place against a background

After the meal the guests at Karinhall. Milch and I, this ostentation was precisely Goering's old friend. During the World War, he had sent his market: women's stockings. I informed Milch that he had market. There had even been with the intention of keeping Germany, and the conscription already been computed. distributed among the guests. I heard that many other guests. And a while after that time Plagemann, who had to move from Milch's control

I had had my personal since I had been entitled of the Prussian Council of just before Goering's birthday. I had a portion of my fee as a birthday gift to Goering. When I mentioned this to was followed with the Air a large sum from this whereupon the Reich was bought with this sum.

Yet we knew that such Goering's enormous expenditure industry provided the sub occasion to find out that phoned us because some of his patrons a bit roughly.

My recent experiences

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day speech at the banquet. He lauded Goering's abilities, qualities, and dignities and offered the toast to him as "one of the greatest Germans." Funk's extravagant words contrasted grotesquely with the actual situation. The whole thing was a ghostly celebration taking place against a background of collapse and ruin.

After the meal the guests scattered through the spacious rooms of Karinhall. Milch and I had some words about where the money for this ostentation was probably coming from. Milch said that recently Goering's old friend Loerzer, the famous fighter pilot of the First World War, had sent him a carload of stuff from the Italian black market: women's stockings, soap, and other rare items. Loerzer had informed Milch that he could have these things sold on the black market. There had even been a price list with the shipment, probably with the intention of keeping black market prices uniform throughout Germany, and the considerable profit that would fall to Milch had already been computed. Instead, Milch had the goods from the car distributed among the employees of his Ministry. Soon afterward I heard that many other carloads had been sold for Goering's benefit. And a while after that the superintendent of the Reich Air Ministry, Plagemann, who had to carry out these deals for Goering, was removed from Milch's control and made a direct subordinate of Goering.

I had had my personal experiences with Goering's birthdays. Ever since I had been entitled to six thousand marks annually as a member of the Prussian Council of State, I had also been receiving every year, just before Goering's birthday, a letter informing me that a considerable portion of my fee would be withheld for the Council of State's birthday gift to Goering. I was not even asked for this contribution. When I mentioned this to Milch he told me that a similar procedure was followed with the Air Ministry's general fund. On every birthday a large sum from this fund was diverted to Goering's account, whereupon the Reich Marshal himself decided what painting was to be bought with this sum.

Yet we knew that such sources could cover only a small part of Goering's enormous expenditures. We did not know what men in industry provided the subsidies; but Milch and I now and again had occasion to find out that such sources existed—when Goering telephoned us because some man in our organizations had treated one of his patrons a bit roughly.

My recent experiences and encounters in Lapland had provided

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three typewritten pages that took me four days—were a sign of the funk I was in. I protested against Sauckel's arrogation of power and against the thrusts of Bormann's district economic advisers, and I asked Hitler for a statement of my unconditional authority in all questions that fell within my jurisdiction. Basically, I was asking for the very thing I had unsuccessfully demanded in such drastic language at the conference in Posen, to the indignation of the Gauleiters. I further wrote that our total production could be carried out rationally only if the "many offices which give directions, criticism, and advice to the plant managements" were concentrated in my hands.¹

Four days later I appealed to Hitler again, with a candor that really was no longer in keeping with our present relationship. I informed him about the camarilla in my Ministry which was undermining my program. I said there was treachery afoot; that a certain small clique of Todt's former assistants, led by Dorsch, had broken faith with me. I therefore considered myself forced, I wrote, to replace Dorsch by a man who had my confidence.²

This last letter, with its news that I was dismissing one of Hitler's favorites without asking him beforehand, was particularly imprudent. For I was violating one of the rules of the regime: that personnel matters must be broached to Hitler at the right moment and by skillful insinuation. Instead, I had bluntly come at him with charges of disloyalty and questionable character in one of his men. That I also sent Bormann a copy of my letter was either foolish or challenging. In doing this I was running counter to all I knew about the nature of Hitler's intriguing entourage. I was probably acting out of a certain attitude of defiance, forced upon me by my isolated position.

My illness had removed me too far from the true focus of power: Hitler. He reacted neither negatively nor positively to all my suggestions, demands, and complaints. I was addressing the empty air; he sent me no answer. I was no longer counted as Hitler's favorite minister and one of his possible successors—a few whispered words by Bormann and a few weeks of illness had put me out of the running. This was partly due to Hitler's peculiarity, often noted by everyone around him, of simply writing off anyone who vanished from his sight for a considerable time. If the person in question reappeared in his entourage after a while, the picture might or might not change. It disillusioned me and snapped some of my ties of personal feeling toward Hitler. But most of the time I was neither angry nor in despair

over my new situation. weariness and resignation

In roundabout ways I with Dorsch, his party he therefore rather ost for confidential talks with tion vis-à-vis me. Goeri the center of gravity had position completely. Unc self, each from differen municating with the oth was scuttled.

For twenty days I lay cast, and had plenty of t pointments. A few hour violent pains in my bac gested a pulmonary em muscular rheumatism an pin), then prescribed sul Two days later I suffer seemed critical, but G rheumatism.

At this point my wife Dr. Friedrich Koch, inte bruch's assistants, to Hoh personal physician but a plicitly charged Professor ment and forbade Dr. G case. On Brandt's instruc mine and was to stay at m. For three days my conc

* On February 11, 1944, I case by writing to Hitler's p invited Morell for a consulta from his other duties, but he sight unseen, prescribed vitan Dr. Koch rejected this sugges total incompetent.

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over my new situation. Physically weakened as I was, I felt only weariness and resignation.

In roundabout ways I finally heard that Hitler was unwilling to part with Dorsch, his party comrade of the twenties. During these weeks he therefore rather ostentatiously honored Dorsch by making time for confidential talks with him and thus strengthening Dorsch's position vis-à-vis me. Goering, Bormann, and Himmler understood how the center of gravity had shifted and took this occasion to destroy my position completely. Undoubtedly each of them was working for himself, each from different motives, and probably each without communicating with the others. But any chance for getting rid of Dorsch was scuttled.

For twenty days I lay on my back, my leg immovable in a plaster cast, and had plenty of time to brood over my resentment and disappointments. A few hours after I was allowed to stand again, I felt violent pains in my back and chest. The blood in my sputum suggested a pulmonary embolism. But Professor Gebhardt diagnosed muscular rheumatism and massaged my chest with bee venom (forapin), then prescribed sulfanilimide, quinine, and various pain killers.³ Two days later I suffered a second violent attack. My condition seemed critical, but Gebhardt continued to insist on muscular rheumatism.

At this point my wife went to Dr. Brandt, who immediately sent Dr. Friedrich Koch, internist at Berlin University and one of Sauerbruch's assistants, to Hohenlychen. Brandt, who was not only Hitler's personal physician but also the commissioner for public health, explicitly charged Professor Koch with sole responsibility for my treatment and forbade Dr. Gebhardt to issue any medical orders in my case. On Brandt's instructions Dr. Koch was assigned a room near mine and was to stay at my side day and night for the time being.*

For three days my condition remained, as Koch stated in his report,

* On February 11, 1944, Dr. Gebhardt tried to force Dr. Koch out of the case by writing to Hitler's personal physician, Brandt's rival, Dr. Morell. He invited Morell for a consultation as an internist. Morell could not be spared from his other duties, but he had the case described to him by telephone and, sight unseen, prescribed vitamin K injections to stop me from spitting blood. Dr. Koch rejected this suggestion and a few weeks later described Morell as a total incompetent.

* The worse the situation, the more he went back to old party - comrades.

"distinctly critical: extreme respiratory difficulty, intense blue coloration, considerable acceleration of the pulse, high temperatures, painful cough, muscular pain, and bloody sputum. The development of the symptoms could be interpreted only as the result of an embolism."

The doctors prepared my wife for the worst. But in contrast to this pessimism, I myself was feeling a remarkable euphoria. The little room expanded into a magnificent hall. A plain wardrobe I had been staring at for three weeks turned into a richly carved display piece, inlaid with rare woods. Hovering between living and dying, I had a sense of well-being such as I had only rarely experienced.

When I had recovered somewhat, my friend Robert Frank told me about a confidential talk he had had one night with Dr. Koch. What he related sounded somewhat sinister: During my critical state Gebhardt kept recommending a small operation which in Koch's view would have been far too perilous. When Koch at first refused to see the need for the operation and then flatly forbade it, Gebhardt had clumsily backed out of the whole thing, alleging that he had only wanted to test his opinion.

Frank begged me to keep the matter confidential, since Dr. Koch was afraid he would vanish into a concentration camp and my informant would certainly have trouble with the Gestapo. And in fact the story had to be suppressed, since I could scarcely have gone to Hitler with it. His reaction was predictable: In an access of rage he would have called the whole thing absolutely impossible, would have pressed that special button of his summoning Bormann, and would have ordered the arrest of these slanderers of Himmler.

At the time this affair did not strike me as quite so much like a cheap spy novel as it may sound today. Even in party circles Himmler had a reputation for ruthless, icy consistency. No one dared quarrel with him seriously. Moreover, the opportunity was made to order: The slightest complication of my illness would have carried me off, so that there would have been no grounds for any suspicion. The episode has its place in a chapter on the struggles for the succession. My position was, it indicated plainly, still powerful, although already so imperiled that further intrigues could be expected.

When we were together in Spandau prison, Funk told me the details of an incident which he had only dared hint at in 1944. Sometime in the autumn of 1943 the staff of Sepp Dietrich's SS army had held a drinking bout. Dr. Gebhardt was among the guests. Funk him-

self had heard about it through Walter, who at the time Walter had remarked to this lion Speer was dangerous; he

My uneasiness in this hospital to be out of it, though encouraging. Rather precipitously finding a new place to convalesce all sorts of medical reasons, in the beginning of March he tried to prevent, when a nearby hospital was attacked by the American Engineers, convinced that I was the target. My inability to be moved, and on an oppressive place.

Shortly before the end of the war had gone on at the time. But he felt that he had had an angry discourse of which Gebhardt had to be not only a physician but also that was really clear, Koch had the utmost to keep me in his hospital.

On February 23, 1944, Funk informed me that the Americans were concentrating their bombing effort as a result that our aircraft production had been, at least for the time being, what it had been, at least for the time being, him a proposal in writing: I had fully dealt with the bomb disposal "Fighter Aircraft Staff" which was in the ministries (Air Ministry and Army) and overcome the crisis in aircraft production.

With things as they were, I had to stave off such proposals. But I would help the hard-pressed I of us, Milch and I, fully realized that the first step toward in-

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self had heard about it through his friend and former adjutant Horst Walter, who at the time was Dietrich's adjutant. It seemed that Gebhardt had remarked to this circle of SS leaders that in Himmler's opinion Speer was dangerous; he would have to disappear.

My uneasiness in this hospital was mounting, and I wanted desperately to be out of it, though the state of my health was still far from encouraging. Rather precipitately, on February 19, I set my people to finding a new place to convalesce. Gebhardt tried to dissuade me with all sorts of medical reasons, and even after I got up again at the beginning of March he tried to prevent my departure. Ten days later, however, when a nearby hospital was struck in the course of a heavy attack by the American Eighth Air Force, Gebhardt became convinced that I was the target. Overnight he changed his mind about my ability to be moved, and on March 17 I was at last able to leave this oppressive place.

Shortly before the end of the war I asked Dr. Koch what had really gone on at the time. But he would only tell me what I already knew, that he had had an angry dispute with Gebhardt over my case, in the course of which Gebhardt had remarked that it was Koch's business to be not only a physician but a "political physician." The one thing that was really clear, Koch said, was that Gebhardt had done his utmost to keep me in his hospital as long as possible. ^④ See p 653

On February 23, 1944, Milch visited me in my sickroom. He informed me that the American Eighth and Fifteenth Air Forces were concentrating their bombing on the German aircraft industry, with the result that our aircraft production would be reduced to a third of what it had been, at least for the month to come. Milch brought with him a proposal in writing: Inasmuch as the Ruhr Staff had successfully dealt with the bomb damage in the Ruhr area, we needed a "Fighter Aircraft Staff" which would pool the talents of the two ministries (Air Ministry and Ministry of Armaments) in order to overcome the crisis in aircraft production.

With things as they were, it would have been prudent of me to stave off such proposals. But I wanted to leave nothing untried which would help the hard-pressed Luftwaffe and therefore consented. Both of us, Milch and I, fully realized that this Fighter Aircraft Staff represented the first step toward incorporation into my Ministry of Arma-

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ments production for the one branch of the services whose armaments work I had not yet taken over.

From my bed I telephoned Goering, who for his part refused to enter into such a partnership. As he saw it, I would be interfering in his domain. I did not accept this veto. Instead, I telephoned Hitler, who thought the idea good, but he turned cool and negative as soon as I said we had been thinking of Gauleiter Hanke to head the new staff. "I made a great mistake when I appointed Sauckel to take charge of labor assignment," Hitler answered on the telephone. "As a Gauleiter he should be in a position to make irrevocable decisions, and instead he is always having to negotiate and make compromises. Never again will I let a Gauleiter become involved in such tasks!" As he spoke Hitler had grown steadily angrier. "The example of Sauckel has had the effect of diminishing the authority of all the Gauleiters. Saur is going to take over this job!" After this Hitler abruptly ended the conversation. For the second time in a short while he had overruled me on an appointment. I had also noticed how cold and unfriendly Hitler's voice had been throughout the latter part of our telephone conversation. Perhaps some other matter had put him in an ill humor. But since Milch also favored Saur, whose power had grown during my illness, I accepted Hitler's order without more ado.

From years of experience I knew the distinctions Hitler made when his adjutant Schaub reminded him of the birthday or illness of one of his numerous associates. A curt "flowers and letter" meant a letter with a fixed text which was presented to him only for signature. The choice of flowers was left to the adjutant. It counted as an honor if Hitler added a few words in his own hand to the letter. If he were particularly concerned, however, he would have Schaub hand him the card and a pen and would write a few lines. Sometimes he even specified what flowers were to be sent. In the past I had belonged among those who were most conspicuously honored, along with movie stars and singers. Therefore, when shortly after the crisis of my illness I received a bowl of flowers with a standard typewritten note, I realized that I had been dropped to the lowest rung in the hierarchy, even though I had meanwhile become one of the most important members of his government. As a sick man I undoubtedly reacted more sensitively than was necessary. For Hitler also telephoned me two or three times to ask about my health. But he blamed me for having

brought about my own illness there! I've always said it's my feet! Throw the sticks into the clumsy attempt to conclude the

Dr. Koch did not think I Obersalzberg's mountain air. ler's guest house near Salzburg commissioned the great bar to build a charmingly curved pavilion. On March 18 the renovated building was inaugurated. I was engaged in negotiations with the architect. After Hitler's last bloodless march into Prague in the evening of my arrival Hitler ended the negotiations.

Seeing him again after an absence of time in all the years I had known him, I noticed a pale and sallow color. I realized for the first sign that I was beginning to see him with unbiased eyes. For almost a year I had been exposed to his personal influence. After years of frenzy I had learned to think about the course of events. He only needed to say a few words to banish my states of exhaustion and despair; now, I felt—in spite of my cordiality—just as weary and cold. I was longing for, was to go away as soon as possible; I wanted to regain my strength. But I did not really feel better because I no longer had a goal.

Nevertheless, my self-assertion made me realize, during those five days, that I was using lies and intrigues to eliminate Hitler's visit to Goering telephoned me that day. When I took occasion to report on my health in a favorable report on my health in a regretful tone: "But con-

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brought about my own illness. "Why did you have to go skiing up there! I've always said it's madness. With those long boards on your feet! Throw the sticks into the fire!" he would add every time in a clumsy attempt to conclude the conversation with a joke.

Dr. Koch did not think I should expose my lung to the strain of Obersalzberg's mountain air. In the park of Klessheim Palace, Hitler's guest house near Salzburg, the prince-bishops of Salzburg had commissioned the great baroque architect Fischer von Erlach to build a charmingly curved pavilion now called the Cloverleaf Palace. On March 18 the renovated building was assigned to me for my convalescence. At the same time Admiral Horthy, the Regent of Hungary, was engaged in negotiations in the main palace which led to Hitler's last bloodless march into a foreign country, Hungary. On the evening of my arrival Hitler paid a visit to me during a pause in the negotiations.

Seeing him again after an interval of ten weeks, I was for the first time in all the years I had known him struck by his overly broad nose and sallow color. I realized that his whole face was repulsive—the first sign that I was beginning to attain some perspective and see him with unbiased eyes. For almost a quarter of a year I had not been exposed to his personal influence but instead to his insults and reprimands. After years of frenzy and fever I had for the first time begun to think about the course I was pursuing at his side. Previously, he only needed to say a few words or to make a gesture in order to banish my states of exhaustion and release extraordinary energies in me; now, I felt—in spite of this reunion and in spite of Hitler's cordiality—just as weary and done in as I had before. All I wanted, all I was longing for, was to go to Meran with my wife and children as soon as possible; I wanted to spend many weeks there, to recover my strength. But I did not really know what I wanted my strength for, because I no longer had a goal.

Nevertheless, my self-assertiveness stirred again when I was forced to realize, during those five days in Klessheim, that my enemies were using lies and intrigues to eliminate me once and for all. The day after Hitler's visit Goering telephoned to congratulate me on my birthday. When I took occasion, overstating somewhat, to give him a favorable report on my health, he answered me in a cheerful rather than regretful tone: "But come now, what you're saying isn't true at

March 1944

all. Dr. Gebhardt told me yesterday that you're suffering from serious heart disease. Without any prospects for improvement, let me tell you! Maybe you don't know that yet!" With many words of praise for my previous achievements, Goering went on to hint at my impending demise. I told him that X-rays and electrocardiograms had found nothing wrong with me.* Goering replied that I had obviously been misinformed and simply refused to accept my account. But it was Gebhardt who had misinformed Goering.

Hitler too, visibly downcast, told his cronies when my wife happened to be within hearing: "Speer won't be recovering!" He too had spoken to Gebhardt, who had pronounced me a wreck incapable of further work.

Perhaps Hitler was thinking of our joint architectural dreams which I now would be prevented from carrying out by an incurable cardiac defect; perhaps he was also thinking of the early death of his first architect, Professor Troost. At any rate, that same day he dropped in on me at Klessheim with a surprise—a wreath of flowers so gigantic that his orderly could barely stagger in with it—a gesture really unusual for him. But a few hours after Hitler's departure Himmler called and officially informed me that Hitler had ordered Dr. Gebhardt to take over the responsibility for my safety in his capacity as an SS group leader and for my health as a physician. Thus Dr. Koch was excluded from my case. Instead I was now attended by an SS escort squad, which Gebhardt assigned to protect me.⁵

On March 23, Hitler came once again to pay a farewell visit, as if he sensed the estrangement which had taken place within me during my illness. And, in spite of his repeated evidences of the old cordiality, my feelings toward Hitler had altered by a distinctly perceptible nuance. I was lastingly stung by the fact that he recalled my former closeness to him only because he was now seeing me again, whereas my achievements as an architect and as a minister had not been important enough to bridge a separation of several weeks. Natu-

* Dorsch also told Zeitler: "Speer is incurably ill and will therefore not be coming back." (Jotting by Zeitler, May 17, 1944.) Afterward, Zeitler informed me of this as an interesting sidelight on all the intrigues. According to Dr. Koch's "Supplementary Report," May 14, 1944: "On May 5, X-ray and electrocardiographic examinations were undertaken. All three sections of the latter revealed no pathological conditions. The X-ray showed a completely normal heart."

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rally, I understood that a man as overburdened as Hitler, working under the most extreme pressure, could be excused for neglecting those of his associates who were temporarily out of his sight. But his general conduct during the past weeks had demonstrated to me how little I really counted for in the group that formed his entourage and also how little he was prepared to accept reason and objective facts as the basis for his decisions. Perhaps because he sensed my coolness, perhaps also in order to console me, he said gloomily that his health too was in a bad way. In fact there were strong indications that he would soon be losing his eyesight. He had nothing to say to my remark that Dr. Brandt would inform him of the sound condition of my heart.

Castle Goyen was situated on a height of land above Meran. Here I spent the six loveliest weeks of my time as Minister of Armaments, the only weeks I had with my family. Dr. Gebhardt had taken up quarters in a distant part of the valley and scarcely made use of his right to regulate my appointments.

During these weeks I was staying in Meran, Goering, without asking me or even informing me, took my two assistants Dorsch and Saur to several conferences with Hitler. For Goering this was an altogether unusual outburst of activity. Evidently he felt this was his chance to establish himself once more as the second man after Hitler, after his many setbacks in the past few years. He was using my two assistants, who were not dangerous to him, to strengthen himself at my expense. Furthermore, he spread the word that my departure from office could be expected, and during these weeks he asked Gauleiter Eigruber of the Upper Danube District what the party thought of General Manager Meindl. Goering, who was friendly with Meindl, explained that he was thinking of mentioning Meindl to Hitler as a possible successor to me.⁶ Ley, already a Reichsleiter saddled with many official duties, likewise put in his claim. If Speer were going, he volunteered, then he would take on this work as well; he'd manage somehow!

Meanwhile Bormann and Himmler were trying to undermine Hitler's confidence in the rest of my department heads by making grave accusations against them. By roundabout ways—Hitler did not think it necessary to inform me—I heard that he was so annoyed with three of them—Liebel, Waeger, and Schieber—that they were as good as

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ousted. All it had taken was a few weeks for Hitler to forget what had seemed to be a renewal of our intimacy at Klessheim. Aside from Fromm, Zeitzler, Guderian, Milch, and Doenitz, only Minister of Economics Funk remained among the small group of top people who had shown some friendliness toward me during my weeks of illness.

For months Hitler had been demanding that industry be transferred to caves and huge shelters so that production would continue despite the bombing. I had always answered that bombers could not be combated with concrete; it would have taken many years of work before our plants could be placed underground or behind massive concrete. Moreover, we were lucky in that the enemy's attacks on armaments production resembled strikes at the wide delta of a river which flowed into many subsidiary channels. If we started protecting this delta, we could only force him to attack where the industrial stream was concentrated in a deep narrow stream bed, I argued. In saying this I was thinking of the chemical industry, coal mines, power plants, and other of my nightmares. There is no doubt that at this time, in the spring of 1944, England and America could have completely shut off one of these production streams and thus made a mockery of all of our other efforts to protect industry.

On April 14, Goering seized the initiative and summoned Dorsch. The huge shelters Hitler was demanding could only be constructed by the Todt Organization, so far as he could see, he said significantly. Dorsch pointed out that the Todt Organization was specifically confined to the occupied territories; it had no right to operate within the territory of the Reich. Still, he did have on hand a design for the kind of shelter wanted, although it had been projected for construction in France.

That same evening Dorsch was summoned to Hitler. "You alone will be authorized to carry out the building of such major structures inside the Reich as well as outside," Hitler said to him. By the next day Dorsch was able to propose several suitable locations and to explain the administrative and technical requirements for erecting the six planned underground industrial sites, each with an area of over one million square feet. The structures would be finished in November 1944, Dorsch promised.⁷

In one of his dreaded impulsive decrees Hitler made Dorsch his direct subordinate and gave the big shelters so high a priority that all other construction projects would have to yield to them. Neverthe-

less it was fairly easy to see that shelters would not be re. they could no longer ever nize the right course whei

Before this, Hitler had about these measures wliured self-esteem, the sei certainly operative on A questioning these decisioi ters and memoranda in v ments on matters of fact, taken long to evolve, aft powers, and my insights rather clearly on the mai projects now, I told Hitle difficulty enough in meet German industrial worke taneously restoring our ar construction for the long, must constantly stop wor struction in order to pr German armaments prod come."

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shelters would not be ready in the promised six months, in fact, that
they could no longer even be started. It was not at all difficult to recog-
nize the right course when the wrong one was so wrong.

Before this, Hitler had not thought it necessary to tell me anything
about these measures which cut so sharply into my powers. My in-
jured self-esteem, the sense of having been personally offended, was
certainly operative on April 19 when I wrote him a letter frankly
questioning these decisions. This was the first of a long series of let-
ters and memoranda in which, frequently concealed behind disagree-
ments on matters of fact, I began to show some independence. It had
taken long to evolve, after years of subjugation to Hitler's suggestive
powers, and my insights were still murky. Nevertheless I spoke out
rather clearly on the matter at hand. To begin such major building
projects now, I told Hitler, was sheer delusion, for "there is already
difficulty enough in meeting the minimal requirements for sheltering
German industrial workers and the foreign labor force and in simul-
taneously restoring our armaments factories. Any plans for launching
construction for the long run have had to be shelved. What is more, I
must constantly stop work on armaments plants already under con-
struction in order to provide the basic necessities for maintaining
German armaments production during the months immediately to
come."

Along with arguments of this sort, I also reproached Hitler for
having acted behind my back. "I have always, even in the days when
I was your architect, followed the rule of letting my assistants work
independently. I grant that this principle has often brought me severe
disappointments, for not everyone is worthy of such trust, and some
men, after having acquired sufficient prestige, have been disloyal to
me." Hitler would not find it difficult to gather from this sentence that
I was referring to Dorsch. My tone became definitely chiding as I
continued: "But be this as it may, I will go on following this principle
with iron consistency. In my view it is the only one that permits a man
to govern and create. The higher the position, the more true this is."

Construction and armaments, I pointed out, were at the present
stage an indivisible whole. It would be well for Dorsch to remain in
charge of construction work in the occupied territories, but in Ger-
many itself we needed a separate director for these operations. I
proposed one of Todt's former assistants, Willi Henne, for the job.

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Both men would have more than enough to do. They could administer their separate tasks under the direction of a loyal associate, Walter Brugmann.⁸

Hitler rejected this proposal. Five weeks later, on May 26, 1944, Brugmann was killed like my predecessor Todt in an unexplained plane crash.

The letter was handed to Hitler on the eve of his birthday by my old assistant Gerhard Fränk. I ended it with an offer to resign if my views were unacceptable to Hitler. As I learned from the best possible source in this case, Hitler's chief secretary Johanna Wolf, Hitler displayed extraordinary annoyance at my letter. Among other things he spluttered: "Even Speer has to find out that there is such a thing as politics."

He had had a similar reaction six weeks before when I called off the building of Berlin bunkers for prominent members of the regime in order to take care of severe damage from an air raid. Evidently, he had gained the impression that I was becoming headstrong. Or, at any rate, this is what he accused me of. In the affair of bunkers, he had Bormann inform me very sharply, without consideration for my illness, that "the commands of the Fuehrer are to be carried out by every German; they cannot be ignored or postponed or delayed at will." At the same time Hitler threatened "to have the Gestapo instantly arrest the responsible official for acting contrary to an order from the Fuehrer and taken to a concentration camp."⁹

No sooner had I learned of Hitler's reaction to my letter—again by roundabout ways—than Goering telephoned me from Obersalzberg. He had heard about my intention to resign, he said, but must inform me from the very highest source that the Fuehrer alone could dictate when a minister might depart from his service.

Our conversation went angrily back and forth for half an hour until we agreed on a compromise action: "Instead of resigning I shall prolong my illness and silently disappear as a minister."

Goering was in hearty agreement: "Yes, that's the solution. That's the way we can do it. The Fuehrer will surely accept that."

In unpleasant situations Hitler always tried to avoid confrontations. He did not dare send for me and tell me to my face that after all that had happened he would have to draw the necessary conclusions and request me to leave my post. Out of similar pusillanimity, a year later, when we had reached an open break, he again did not attempt to force

my resignation. But in retrospect possible to make Hitler so a sult. In other words, those v did so voluntarily.

Whatever my motives ma liked the idea of resigning. I almost every day in the blue low, the bombers of the An Alps from their Italian bases a German fighter plane any scene of total defenselessness: me than any reports. Altho again in replacing the weapc have to stop, I thought pessin How tempting to follow the I inexorably approaching disas but quietly disappear. But it order to put an end to my Hitler and his regime. In spi not come to me then and in come to me today.

My escapist notions were one of my closest associates word had seeped through to and Rohland had come to pl industry, which has followed those who will come after yo like! For us, the thing that m on to which will carry us thr us with that, you have to stay

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April 1944

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my resignation. But in retrospect I must admit that it was certainly possible to make Hitler so angry that dismissal would inevitably result. In other words, those who remained members of his entourage did so voluntarily.

Whatever my motives may have been at the time, in any case, I liked the idea of resigning. For I could see omens of the war's end almost every day in the blue southern sky when, flying provocatively low, the bombers of the American Fifteenth Air Force crossed the Alps from their Italian bases to attack German industrial targets. Not a German fighter plane anywhere in sight; no antiaircraft fire. This scene of total defenselessness produced a greater impression upon me than any reports. Although we had so far succeeded time and again in replacing the weapons lost in our retreats, that would soon have to stop, I thought pessimistically, in the face of this air offensive. How tempting to follow the line suggested by Goering and, given the inexorably approaching disaster, not stand in a responsible position, but quietly disappear. But it did not occur to me to resign my post in order to put an end to my contribution and thus hasten the end of Hitler and his regime. In spite of all our dissensions that thought did not come to me then and in a similar situation probably would not come to me today.

My escapist notions were interrupted on April 20 by a visit from one of my closest associates, Walter Rohland. For in the meantime word had seeped through to industry about my intention to resign, and Rohland had come to plead with me. "You have no right to put industry, which has followed you loyally to this day, at the mercy of those who will come after you. We can well imagine what they will be like! For us, the thing that matters from now on is what can we hang on to which will carry us through the period after a lost war. To help us with that, you have to stay at your post!"

So far as I recollect, this was the first time that the specter of "scorched earth" loomed before me. For Rohland went on to speak of the fear that a desperate top leadership might order wholesale destruction. Then and there, on that day, I felt something stirring within me that was quite apart from Hitler; a sense of responsibility toward the country and the people to save as much as possible of our industrial potential, so that the nation could survive the period after a lost war. But for the present it was still a vague and shadowy sense.

Only a few hours later, toward one o'clock at night, Field Marshal

his salon like a formal guest. All this made a strong impression on me, because I had no idea what the psychological purpose of this little scene was. From this point on there began, on my part, a period of an extremely schizoid relationship to Hitler. On the one hand he conferred distinctions upon me, gave me all sorts of signs of special favor which could not fail to affect me; on the other hand I was slowly growing aware that his actions were proving more and more dire for the German nation. And although the old magic still had its potency, although Hitler continued to prove his instinct for handling people, it became increasingly hard for me to remain unconditionally loyal to him.

The fronts were curiously reversed not only during this cordial welcome but also in our subsequent conversation: It was he who was courting me. For instance, he would not hear of construction's being removed from my jurisdiction and turned over to Dorsch. "I am determined not to separate these fields. You know I have nobody I can turn building over to. Such a misfortune that Dr. Todt was killed. You know what building means to me, Herr Speer. Please understand! I will approve sight unseen all the measures you think necessary for the construction area."¹¹

In saying this Hitler was flatly reversing himself, for as I knew from Himmler, he had decided only a few days before that Dorsch would be entrusted with this work. As so often, he brushed aside the view he had only recently expressed and ignored Dorsch's feelings as well. This inconsistency was still another proof of his profound contempt for people. Moreover, I had to take into consideration the possibility that this new change of mind would not last. Therefore, I replied that this was something which had to be settled on a long-term basis. "It will put me in an impossible position if this matter comes up for discussion again."

Hitler promised to remain firm: "My decision is final. I will no longer consider changing it." He even went on to make little of the charges against my three department heads who had been, I knew, already slated for dismissal.*

When we had finished our conversation, Hitler led me to the

* Hitler hinted that Himmler suspected Schieber, my department head, of planning to flee Germany, that Mayor Liebel had political enemies, and that General Waeger was considered unreliable.

cloakroom again, took pany me to the door. Tl and in the informal tone an appointment upstairs ning I sat in the group Braun, and his court. Tl proposed that records be afterward *Die Flederma*.

After the ups and do past, I felt cheerful that seemed cleared away. I depressed me. I could tion. I felt I had come on Himmler, and Borman now, for they must sure haps—I was already spe game was being played : he could really trust.

When I analyzed the me back to this intimati position of power I had Even though I was only —and I don't think I ev it worth striving for. I w of his popularity, his gl I still felt that my voca pride that was independ and intoxicated by the to this and that, to say with expenditures in th but I would have sorel leadership. The deep m over, put to rout by th Hitler's magnetic power diminished force. To b my loyalty had become be what it had been. B and content.

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ne to his home at Ober- any personal character. ed on our drinking, and amiliar *Du* of intimacy owever, I pretended that ppened, while Lammers dress. That did not keep o a corner shortly after- reaction, or rather with itler was obviously well

In the middle of May 1944, during a visit to the Hamburg shipyards, Gauleiter Kaufmann confidentially informed me that even after half a year the resentment over my speech to the Gauleiters had not yet subsided. Almost all the Gauleiters disliked me, he said; and Bormann was encouraging this attitude. Kaufmann warned me of the danger that threatened me from this side.

I thought this hint important enough to mention it to Hitler in the course of my next conversation with him. He had again conferred a distinction upon me by a little gesture, inviting me for the first time up to his wood-paneled study on the second floor of the Berghof, where he generally held only extremely personal and intimate discussions. In his private tone, almost like an intimate friend, he advised me to avoid doing anything that would arouse the Gauleiters against me. I should never underestimate their power, he said, for that would complicate things for me in the future. He was well aware of their shortcomings, he said; many were simple-hearted swashbucklers, rather rough, but loyal. I had to take them as they were. Hitler's whole tone suggested that he was not going to let Bormann influence him in his attitude toward me. "I certainly have received complaints, but the matter is settled as far as I am concerned," he said. Thus this part of Bormann's offensive had also failed.

Hitler, too, had probably become entangled in contradictory feelings. For he now informed me, as if asking me not to take it amiss, of his intention to confer the Reich's highest distinction upon Himmler. For the Reichsführer-SS deserved it for some very special services, he added almost apologetically.* I replied good-humoredly that I would wait until after the war when I hoped to receive the no less valuable decoration for art and science for my achievements as an architect. Nevertheless, Hitler seemed to have been worried about how I would react to this show of favor for Himmler.

What was really bothering me on that day was that Bormann might show Hitler an article from the British newspaper *The Observer* (of April 9, 1944) in which I was described as a foreign body in the

*The decoration in question was the Teutonic Order, whose holders were supposed to form a confraternity. Hitler never carried out his plan; Himmler was not given the decoration, which had previously been awarded only posthumously. The decoration for which I had expressed my preference was the National Prize. It was thickly encrusted with diamonds and so heavy that the wearer had to have a pendant inside his dinner jacket to carry the weight.

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party-doctrinaire works. I could easily imagine him doing so, and even the caustic remarks he would make. In order to anticipate Bormann, I myself handed Hitler the translation of this article, commenting jokingly on it as I did so. With considerable fuss Hitler put on his glasses and began to read:

Speer is, in a sense, more important for Germany today than Hitler, Himmler, Goering, Goebbels, or the generals. They all have, in a way, become the mere auxiliaries of the man who actually directs the giant power machine—charged with drawing from it the maximum effort under maximum strain. . . . In him is the very epitome of the “managerial revolution.”

Speer is not one of the flamboyant and picturesque Nazis. Whether he has any other than conventional political opinions at all is unknown. He might have joined any other political party which gave him a job and a career. He is very much the successful average man, well dressed, civil, noncorrupt, very middle-class in his style of life, with a wife and six children. Much less than any of the other German leaders does he stand for anything particularly German or particularly Nazi. He rather symbolizes a type which is becoming increasingly important in all belligerent countries: the pure technician, the classless bright young man without background, with no other original aim than to make his way in the world and no other means than his technical and managerial ability. It is the lack of psychological and spiritual ballast, and the ease with which he handles the terrifying technical and organizational machinery of our age, which makes this slight type go extremely far nowadays. . . . This is their age; the Hitlers and Himmlers we may get rid of, but the Speers, whatever happens to this particular special man, will long be with us.

Hitler read the long commentary straight through, folded the sheet, and handed it back to me without a word but with great respect.

During the following weeks and months I became more and more aware, in spite of everything, of the distance that had grown up between Hitler and me. It increased steadily. Nothing is more difficult than to restore authority after it has been shaken. After my first experiment in opposing Hitler, I had become more independent in my thinking and acting. And Hitler, instead of being enraged, had seemed only rather perplexed by my new attitude and tried to propitiate me,

even to the point of retracting: Goering, and Bormann. Although the valuable lesson that a resolute results.

Nevertheless, even this episode best it made me begin to doubt. Thus, I was outraged that the lesson from any of the sacrifices they endlessly expended lives and prop intrigues, showing themselves a other. Thoughts of this sort marring myself. Still hesitantly, I went to my previous life, tasks, ties, brought me to this pass.

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even to the point of retracting a decision he had made with Himmler, Goering, and Bormann. Although I too had given way, I had learned the valuable lesson that a resolute stand against Hitler could achieve results.

Nevertheless, even this episode did not shake my faith in Hitler. At best it made me begin to doubt the rectitude of this system of rule. Thus, I was outraged that the leaders continued to exempt themselves from any of the sacrifices they expected of the people; that they recklessly expended lives and property; that they pursued their sordid intrigues, showing themselves as totally unethical even toward each other. Thoughts of this sort may have contributed to my slowly freeing myself. Still hesitantly, I was beginning to bid farewell, farewell to my previous life, tasks, ties, and to the thoughtlessness that had brought me to this pass.

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era in the air war began. It meant the end of German armaments production.

The next day, along with technicians of the bombed Leuna Works, we groped our way through a tangle of broken and twisted pipe systems. The chemical plants had proved to be extremely sensitive to bombing; even optimistic forecasts could not envisage production being resumed for weeks. After this attack our daily output of five thousand, eight hundred and fifty metric tons dropped to four thousand, eight hundred and twenty metric tons. Still, together with our reserve of five hundred and seventy-four thousand metric tons of aircraft fuel, that could see us through more than nineteen months.

On May 19, 1944, after I had taken measure of the consequences of the attack, I flew to Obersalzberg, where Hitler received me in the presence of General Keitel. I described the situation in these words: "The enemy has struck us at one of our weakest points. If they persist at it this time, we will soon no longer have any fuel production worth mentioning. Our one hope is that the other side has an air force General Staff as scatterbrained as ours!"

Keitel, who was always trying to please Hitler, hastened to say that he would be able to bridge the gap with his reserves. He concluded with Hitler's standard argument: "How many difficult situations we have already survived!" And turning to Hitler, he said: "We shall survive this one too, *mein Führer!*"

But this time Hitler did not seem to share Keitel's optimism. Along with Goering, Keitel, and Milch, four industrialists, Krauch, Pleiger, Bütefisch, and E. R. Fischer, as well as Kehrl, chief of the Planning and Raw Materials Department, were called in for a further discussion of the situation.* Goering tried to keep out the representatives of the fuel industry. Such important matters had better be discussed in privacy, he said. But Hitler had already settled on the participants.

Four days later we were all waiting in the inhospitable entrance hall of the Berghof for Hitler, who was conducting a conference in the salon. Beforehand, I had asked the fuel industry people to tell Hitler the unvarnished truth. But Goering used the last few minutes before

* Krauch was the director of the chemical industry, Pleiger was Reich Commissioner for Coal and also the manager of important fuel plants, Bütefisch was head of the Leuna Works, and Fischer was Chairman of the Board of I. G. Farben.

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May 19, 1944

the beginning of the meeting to exhort the industrialists not to say anything too pessimistic. He was probably afraid that Hitler would place the blame for the debacle chiefly on him.

Several high-ranking military men, participants in the preceding meeting, hurried past us. We were immediately called in by one of the adjutants. Although Hitler shook hands with each of us, his welcome was terse and absent-minded. He asked us all to sit down and declared that he had called this meeting in order to be informed about the consequences of the latest air raids. Then he asked the representatives of industry for their opinion. Speaking as sober, statistically minded businessmen, they all testified to the hopelessness of the situation if the raids were continued systematically. Hitler, to be sure, at first tried to dispel such pessimistic verdicts by stereotyped interjections such as: "You'll manage it somehow," or, "We've been through worse crises." And Keitel and Goering instantly seized upon these cues, going even beyond Hitler in their confidence in the future and trying to blur the effect of our factual arguments. Keitel, in particular, harped upon his fuel reserve. But the industrialists were made of sterner stuff than Hitler's entourage. They held fast to their verdicts, supporting them by data and comparative figures.

All at once Hitler executed one of his sudden turns and began to urge them to evaluate the situation in the most objective terms. It seemed as if at last he wanted to hear the unpleasant truth, as if he were tired of all the concealments, the false optimism, and the lying servilities. He himself summed up the result of the conference: "In my view the fuel, Buna rubber, and nitrogen plants represent a particularly sensitive point for the conduct of the war, since vital materials for armaments are being manufactured in a small number of plants."

Torpid and absent-minded though he had seemed at the beginning, Hitler left the impression of a sober, intense man of keen insight. The only trouble was that a few months later, when the worst had already happened, he no longer wanted to acknowledge these insights. On the other hand, Goering scolded us as soon as we were back in the anteroom for having burdened Hitler with anxieties and pessimistic nonsense.

The cars drove up. Hitler's guests went to the Berchtesgaden Hof for some refreshments. For on such occasions Hitler regarded the Berghof merely as a conference site; he felt no obligations as a

host. But now, after the participation of his private circle poured out, Hitler had withdrawn for a few days. He took his cane, hat, and black overcoat and began. There we were served the fireplace; trivial talk was more friendly. It was all too friendly, too, he said not another word.

After sixteen days of feverish production level when the 28-29, 1944. This time a mere can Eighth Air Force delivered her in the first attack. Concurrently struck at the principal refineries. Now production was actually statements at Obersalzberg had days later, and Goering's bold remarks of Hitler's subsequent had sunk to a new low.

It was not only for utilitarian advantage of Goering's weakness of fighter planes we had, to Hitler that my Ministry take climate was largely a desire to during my illness.

On June 4, I requested Hitler, Obersalzberg, "to influence the Reich of his own accord, and the of air armaments in my Ministry."

Hitler did not object to my challenge, he understood that this was Goering's pride and prestige. He was saying with considerable force incorporated into your Ministry; then the Reich Marshal at once and discuss the details of the transfer.

Only a few months before Hitler

May 28-29, 1944

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host. But now, after the participants in the meeting had left, members of his private circle poured out of all the rooms on the upper story. Hitler had withdrawn for a few minutes; we waited in the vestibule. He took his cane, hat, and black cape; the daily tramp to the teahouse began. There we were served coffee and cake. The fire crackled in the fireplace; trivial talk was made. Hitler let himself be wafted into a friendlier world. It was all too clear how much he needed that. To me, too, he said not another word about the danger hanging over our heads.

After sixteen days of feverish repairs we had just reached the former production level when the second attack wave struck on May 28-29, 1944. This time a mere four hundred bombers of the American Eighth Air Force delivered a greater blow than twice that number in the first attack. Concurrently, the American Fifteenth Air Force struck at the principal refineries in the Rumanian oil fields at Ploesti. Now production was actually reduced by half.² Our pessimistic statements at Obersalzberg had thus been fully confirmed only five days later, and Goering's bold bluster had been refuted. Occasional remarks of Hitler's subsequently suggested that Goering's standing had sunk to a new low.

It was not only for utilitarian reasons that I moved quickly to take advantage of Goering's weakness. Having done so well in the production of fighter planes we had, to be sure, every reason to propose to Hitler that my Ministry take charge of all air armaments.³ But my motive was largely a desire to pay Goering back for his treacheries during my illness.

On June 4, I requested Hitler, who was still directing the war from Obersalzberg, "to influence the Reich Marshal so that he will call upon me of his own accord, and the proposal to incorporate production of air armaments in my Ministry will proceed from him."

Hitler did not object to my challenging Goering in this way. Moreover, he understood that this little stratagem of mine would spare Goering's pride and prestige. He therefore took up my suggestion, saying with considerable forcefulness: "Air armaments must be incorporated into your Ministry; that is beyond discussion. I'll send for the Reich Marshal at once and inform him of my intentions. You discuss the details of the transfer with him."⁴

Only a few months before Hitler had gone to great lengths to avoid

June 4, 1944

saying anything outright to his old paladin. He had, for example, sent me to see Goering in his hideaway in the remote Rominten Heath to discuss some third-rate unpleasantness that I have long since forgotten. Goering must have guessed my assignment, for contrary to his usual custom he treated me like a highly honored guest, had horses and carriage readied for a tour of the huge hunting preserve that went on for hours, and chattered away without pause or point, so that in the end I returned to Hitler having accomplished nothing. I never had a chance to say a word about my mission. Hitler knew Goering well enough to sympathize with my plight.

This time Goering did not try to dodge the issue by pretending cordiality. Our discussion took place in the private study of his house at Obersalzberg. Hitler had already told him what was in question. Goering complained bitterly about Hitler's somersaults. Only two weeks ago, Goering said, Hitler had wanted to take the construction industry away from me; it had all been settled, and then, after a short talk with me, he had undone it all. That was how things always were. Unfortunately the Fuehrer was all too frequently not a man of firm decisions. Naturally, if that was how Hitler wanted it, he would turn air armaments production over to me, Goering said resignedly. But it was all very baffling, since only a short while ago Hitler had thought that I had too many jobs on my hands as it was.

Although I too had begun to notice these sudden alternations of favor and disfavor and recognized them as dangerous to my own future, I confess that I found a certain justice in seeing Goering's and my roles exchanged. On the other hand I did not try to humble Goering publicly. Instead of preparing a decree for Hitler, I arranged to have Goering himself transfer the responsibility for air armaments to my Ministry. He issued the decree.⁵

My takeover of the air armaments industry was a minor matter compared with the havoc being wrought in Germany by the enemy air forces. After a pause of only two weeks, during which their air strength was mostly used for supporting the invasion, the Allies staged a new series of attacks which put many fuel plants out of action. On June 22, nine-tenths of the production of airplane fuel was knocked out; only six hundred and thirty-two metric tons were produced daily. The attacks then lessened somewhat, and on July 17, we once more attained two thousand three hundred and seven metric tons, forty per cent of our original production. But on July 21, only four days later,

we were down to one hundred virtually done for. Ninety-per cent out of operation.

Then, the enemy permitted works partially, so that by fuel was up to six hundred. It seemed it a triumph to reach. The many attacks had taken chemical plants that direct sive damage. Merely the s caused leaks everywhere. By we reached ten percent, in October ten percent again—of we ourselves were surprised (one thousand six hundred a

"In view of the highly critical the Minister fears that the enemy fully recognized," my Office "Minister" therefore sent a the fuel situation. Passages for word with the first men stated plainly that the outlook would have to consume more fuels, and that, afterward, the close, which would inevitably

Along with these grim prospects which might help us avoid them. Above all, I asked Hitler of all our resources. I

* On May 22, I had obtained Below, Hitler's air force adjutant. Point 8 of the *Führerprotokoll*, I keep me constantly informed about intended to forestall any further my illness. Von Below was also ture. It was useless for me to have demanded that I summarize then finished. Von Below reported the preceding ones carelessly, even without comments.

nization, be given every opportunity ruthlessly confiscating machinery, and drawing on skilled labor to give him such powers, first of all. That won't do. I can't allow

the gravity of the situation, even in the emergency often presented to him that it would be impossible to produce enough fuel. Hitler insisted that he had tank production. Two months later a hundred factories were assigned to rebuilding the hydroelectricity constituted skilled workmen's production. By the end of the year to three hundred and fifty

factories, I was aghast at the increasing number of reports from my factories of production losses, on plants being started up again. But the clear premise that we would not be able to resist enemy air raids. On July 28, Hitler said to "reserve a significant portion of the home front."⁸ I remember whether it would not be necessary to protecting the home front so that in August and September, if possible, instead of following the uncertainty that in September or October and at home will be unable

to answer these questions to Hitler. By the end of May he had agreed that out of our increased production it would be assembled which

there were only about two hundred factories for repelling daytime attacks.

July 1944

would be reserved for defense of the home industry. Goering, for his part—after a major conference at Karinhall where the representatives of the fuel industry had again described the urgency of the situation—had solemnly promised that this "Reich" air fleet would never be diverted to the front. But once the invasion began, Hitler and Goering had the planes committed in France. There the entire fleet was knocked out within a few weeks without having done any visible good. Now, at the end of July, Hitler and Goering renewed their promise. Once more a force of two thousand fighter planes was set up for home defense. It was to be ready to start in September. But once again the basic failure to comprehend the situation made a farce of this provision.

With benefit of hindsight I stated to an armaments conference on December 1, 1944: "We must realize that the men on the enemy side who are directing the economic air raids know something about German economic life; that there—in contrast to our bombings—wise planning exists. Fortunately for us the enemy began following this strategy only in the last half or three-quarters of a year. . . . Before that he was, at least from his standpoint, committing absurdities." When I said that I did not know that as early as December 9, 1942, a good two years before, a working paper of the American Economic Warfare Division had stated that it was "better to cause a high degree of destruction in a few really essential industries or services than to cause a small degree of destruction in many industries." The effects of such selective bombing, the experts pointed out, were cumulative, and they argued that the plan once adopted should be pursued with unyielding resolution.⁹

The idea was correct, the execution defective.

As early as August 1942, Hitler had assured the naval leadership that the Allies could not make a successful invasion unless they were able to take a sizable port.¹⁰ Without one, he pointed out, an enemy landing at any point on the coast could not receive sufficient supplies long enough to withstand counterattacks by the German forces. Given the great length of the French, Belgian, and Dutch coasts, a complete line of pillboxes spaced close enough to offer mutual protection would have far exceeded the capacity of the German construction industry. Moreover, there were not enough soldiers available to man such a large number of pillboxes. Consequently, the larger ports were ringed

Aug 1942, July 1944

INSIDE THE THIRD REICH

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D.T. with pillboxes, while the intervening coastal areas were only protected by observation bunkers at long intervals. Some fifteen thousand smaller bunkers were intended to shelter the soldiers during the shelling prior to an attack. As Hitler conceived it, however, during the actual attack the soldiers would come out into the open, since a protected position undermines those qualities of courage and personal initiative which were essential for battle.

Hitler planned these defensive installations down to the smallest details. He even designed the various types of bunkers and pillboxes, usually in the hours of the night. The designs were only sketches, but they were executed with precision. Never sparing in self-praise, he often remarked that his designs ideally met all the requirements of a frontline soldier. They were adopted almost without revision by the general of the Corps of Engineers.

For this task we consumed, in barely two years of intensive building, seventeen million three hundred thousand cubic yards of concrete¹¹ worth 3.7 billion DM. In addition the armaments factories were deprived of 1.2 million metric tons of iron. All this expenditure and effort was sheer waste. By means of a single brilliant technical idea the enemy bypassed these defenses within two weeks after the first landing. For as is well known, the invasion troops brought their own port with them. At Arromanches and Omaha Beach they built loading ramps and other installations on the open coast, following carefully laid-out plans. Thus they were able to assure their supplies of ammunition, implements, and rations, as well as the landing of reinforcements.* Our whole plan of defense had proved irrelevant.

Rommel, whom Hitler had appointed inspector of the coastal defenses in the west at the end of 1943, showed more foresight. Shortly after his appointment Hitler had invited him to the East Prussian headquarters. After a long conference he had accompanied the Field Marshal outside his bunker, where I was waiting since I had the next appointment. Apparently the discussion they were having flared up once more when Rommel bluntly told Hitler: "We must repulse the

* According to W. S. Roskill, *The War at Sea* (London, 1961), Vol. III, Part 2, the landing could never have been carried out without these harbors. Some four hundred ships with a total displacement of a million and a half tons were used; some of them were sunk to form a breakwater. The construction time was doubled because of storms; yet after ten days the harbors began to take shape, and from July 8 on the British harbor at Avranches handled six thousand tons daily, whereas the American harbor was not yet completed.

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enemy at his first landing s do the trick. Only primitive along the coast can make 1 measures will be effective."

Rommel went on in a suc to throw them back at once, Atlantic Wall. Toward the e dropped in such concentrati moralized. If you cannot ch will be ineffective, even the ba

Rommel spoke courteously formula, "mein Führer." He a technical expert; in Hitler's in combating Western offens received Rommel's criticism waiting for the last argument is something I wanted to sh Marshal." Hitler led the two pletely armored truck on whic mounted. Soldiers demonstra fired and the safeguards agai many of these can you delive Hitler asked. Saur promised: mored flak weapon we can tal over our divisions."

Had Rommel given up arg At any rate, he responded with When Hitler saw that he coul fidence he had been hoping fo returned to his bunker, out of me. He did not mention the e Dietrich gave me a vivid accou bombing on his elite divisions. thrown completely off balance, uninjured, their fighting spirit w.

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in, 1961), Vol. III, Part 2, these harbors. Some four and a half tons were used; instruction time was doubled to take shape, and six thousand tons daily,

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enemy at his first landing site. The pillboxes around the ports don't do the trick. Only primitive but effective barriers and obstacles all along the coast can make the landing so difficult that our counter-measures will be effective."

Rommel went on in a succinct, firm manner: "If we don't manage to throw them back at once, the invasion will succeed in spite of the Atlantic Wall. Toward the end in Tripoli and Tunis the bombs were dropped in such concentrations that even our best troops were demoralized. If you cannot check the bombing, all the other methods will be ineffective, even the barriers."

Rommel spoke courteously, but aloofly; he noticeably avoided the formula, "*mein Führer*." He too had acquired the reputation of being a technical expert; in Hitler's eyes he had become a kind of specialist in combating Western offensives. That was the only reason Hitler received Rommel's criticism calmly. But he seemed to have been waiting for the last argument about the concentrated bombings. "Here is something I wanted to show you today in that connection, Field Marshal." Hitler led the two of us to an experimental vehicle, a completely armored truck on which an 8.8 centimeter antiaircraft gun was mounted. Soldiers demonstrated the speed with which it could be fired and the safeguards against side-sway when it was fired. "How many of these can you deliver in the next few months, Herr Saur?" Hitler asked. Saur promised a few hundred. "You see, with this armored flak weapon we can take care of the concentration of bombers over our divisions."

Had Rommel given up arguing against so much amateurishness? At any rate, he responded with a contemptuous, almost pitying smile. When Hitler saw that he could not draw out the expressions of confidence he had been hoping for, he curtly bade Rommel good-by and returned to his bunker, out of sorts, for the conference with Saur and me. He did not mention the episode. Later, after the invasion, Sepp Dietrich gave me a vivid account of the demoralizing effect of massed bombing on his elite divisions. The soldiers who had survived were thrown completely off balance, reduced to apathy. Even if they were uninjured, their fighting spirit was shattered for days.

On June 6, I was at the Berghof about ten o'clock in the morning when one of Hitler's military adjutants told me that the invasion had begun early that morning.

"Has the Fuehrer been awakened?" I asked.

June 1944

June 1944

He shook his head. "No, he receives the news after he has eaten breakfast."

In recent days Hitler had kept on saying that the enemy would probably begin with a feigned attack in order to draw our troops away from the ultimate invasion site. So no one wanted to awaken Hitler and be ranted at for having judged the situation wrongly.

At the situation conference in the Berghof salon a few hours later Hitler seemed more set than ever on his preconceived idea that the enemy was only trying to mislead him. "Do you recall? Among the many reports we've received there was one that exactly predicted the landing site and the day and hour. That only confirms my opinion that this is not the real invasion yet."

The enemy intelligence service had deliberately played this information into his hands, Hitler maintained, in order to divert him from the true invasion site and lure him into committing his divisions too soon and in the wrong place. Misled by a correct report, he now rejected his originally accurate view that the Normandy coast would probably be the focus of the invasion.

During the previous several weeks, Hitler had received contradictory predictions on the time and place of the invasion from the rival intelligence organizations of the SS, the Wehrmacht, and the Foreign Office. As in so many other fields, in this one too Hitler had taken over the task, difficult enough for the professionals, of deciding which report was the right one, which intelligence service deserved more confidence, which one had penetrated more deeply into the enemy's counsels. Now he scoffed at the various services, calling them all incompetent, and, growing more and more heated, attacked intelligence in general. "How many of those fine agents are paid by the Allies, eh? Then they deliberately plant confusing reports. I won't even pass this one on to Paris. We simply have to hold it back. Otherwise it will only make our staffs nervous."

It was noon before the most urgent question of the day was decided: to throw the OKW reserve in France against the Anglo-American bridgehead. For Hitler had the final say on the disposition of every division. He had even been inclined to ignore the demand of Field Marshal Rundstedt, the Commander in Chief of the western theater of war, that these divisions be held in reserve for the impending battle. Because of this delay two armored divisions were no longer able to use the night of June 6-7 for their advance. By daylight their

deployment was held up by the made contact with the enemy matériel.

This day so crucial for the co been expected, been at all a t situations, Hitler tried to maintain self-control. It would have been casual discourse to show nervous

But during the following days and more absurd mistrust, Hitler was merely a feint whose purpose his defensive forces wrongly. His invasion would take place at another been stripped of troops. The not favorable for large-scale landing expected the decisive assault to as though he were determined to have been right. For there, he been emplacing the heaviest navy to destroy an enemy landing fleet commit the Fifteenth Army, stationed the coast of Normandy.*

Hitler had still other grounds: Straits of Dover. Fifty-five positions which several hundred "flying boats" London daily. Hitler assumed that primarily against these launching Allies could take this part of France. Rather, he was counting on their head and whittle it down in heavy

Hitler and all of us hoped that sow horror, confusion, and paralysis estimated its effects. I myself did

* The enemy was counting on finding W. F. Craven and J. L. Cate, *The Army on D-Day* and the following days the regular bridges over the Seine were Force in order to prevent the German from regrouping.

June 1944

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deployment was held up by the enemy bombers, and even before they made contact with the enemy they suffered severe losses in men and matériel.

This day so crucial for the course of the war had not, as might have been expected, been at all a turbulent one. Especially in dramatic situations, Hitler tried to maintain his calm—and his staff imitated this self-control. It would have been an infraction of the usual tone of casual discourse to show nervousness or anxiety.

But during the following days and weeks, in characteristic but more and more absurd mistrust, Hitler remained convinced that the invasion was merely a feint whose purpose was to trick him into deploying his defensive forces wrongly. He continued to hold that the real invasion would take place at another spot which would have meanwhile been stripped of troops. The navy, too, considered the terrain unfavorable for large-scale landings, he declared. For the time being he expected the decisive assault to take place in the vicinity of Calais—as though he were determined that the enemy, too, would prove him to have been right. For there, around Calais, he had ever since 1942 been emplacing the heaviest naval guns under many feet of concrete to destroy an enemy landing fleet. This was the reason he did not commit the Fifteenth Army, stationed at Calais, to the battlefield on the coast of Normandy.*

Hitler had still other grounds for expecting an attack across the Straits of Dover. Fifty-five positions had been prepared along it, from which several hundred "flying bombs" were to be launched toward London daily. Hitler assumed that the real invasion would be directed primarily against these launching ramps. He refused to admit that the Allies could take this part of France quite quickly from Normandy. Rather, he was counting on being able to restrict the enemy bridgehead and whittle it down in heavy battles.

Hitler and all of us hoped that this new weapon, the V-1, would sow horror, confusion, and paralysis in the enemy camp. We far overestimated its effects. I myself did have some doubts because of the

* The enemy was counting on finding Hitler more determined. According to W. F. Craven and J. L. Cate, *The Army Air Forces in World War II*, Vol. III, on D-Day and the following days the twelve railroad bridges and the fourteen regular bridges over the Seine were destroyed by the American Ninth Air Force in order to prevent the German Fifteenth Army, drawn up near Calais, from regrouping.

June 22, 1944

low speed of these flying bombs and therefore advised Hitler to launch them only when there were low-lying clouds.¹² But he paid no attention. On June 22, in response to Hitler's premature command, the first V-1 pilotless jets were catapulted off their launch ramps in great haste. Only ten of them could be dispatched, and only five reached London. Hitler forgot that he himself had insisted on rushing matters and vented his fury at the bungled project upon the builders. At the situation conference Goering hastened to shift the blame to his opponent Milch, and Hitler was on the point of deciding to halt the production of the flying bomb on the grounds that it was a wasteful blunder. Then the press chief handed him some exaggerated, sensationalized reports from the London press on the effects of the V-1. Hitler's mood promptly changed. Now he demanded increased production; and Goering too declared that this great achievement of his air force had always been a favorite project of his. Nothing more was said about Milch, the previous day's scapegoat.

Before the invasion Hitler had emphasized that immediately after the landing he would go to France to conduct operations in person. In view of this, at an expense of countless millions of marks, hundreds of miles of telephone cables were laid and two headquarters built by the Todt Organization, employing large quantities of concrete and expensive installations. Hitler himself had fixed on the location and the size of the headquarters. He justified the tremendous outlay during this period, when he was losing France, by remarking that at least one of the headquarters was situated precisely at the future western border of Germany and therefore could serve as part of a system of fortifications.

On June 17, he visited this headquarters, called W 2, situated between Soissons and Laon. That same day he returned to Obersalzberg. He was sulky and cross: "Rommel has lost his nerve; he's become a pessimist. In these times only optimists can achieve anything."

After such remarks it was only a question of time when Rommel would be relieved of his command. For Hitler still regarded his defensive positions opposite the bridgehead as unconquerable. But that same evening he remarked to me that W 2 seemed to him too unsafe, situated as it was in the heart of partisan-ridden France.

On June 22, 1944, almost at the same time as the Anglo-American invasion was achieving its first great successes, a Soviet offensive was initiated—which was soon to lead to the loss of twenty-five German

divisions. Now the Red Army even in the summer. There weeks, when three fronts were and in the air—Hitler demonstrated capacity for perseverance. Not its many setbacks, had hard and other of his fellows of the "time of struggle," as it was a the slightest anxiety in the presence of the composure he demonstrated greatly to the contrary, he was always conscious, he knew what discouragement his composure even for a extraordinary act of will to the of his rapid aging, in spite of and in spite of the ever greater. His will often seemed to me year-old child whom nothing was in some ways ridiculous, it

This phenomenal confidence feats cannot, however, be explained alone. In Spandau prison, Funk, he, Funk, was able to deceive about his health was that he but attitude had been the basis of can only explain Hitler's rigid himself believe in his ultimate himself. He was forever holding saw not only himself but also divine Providence. His religion must necessarily come his way by autosuggestion. The more more obstinately he opposed the tions of Fate. Naturally, he also But he transmuted them by his as a secret guarantee, offered. Sometimes he could realize that could not be shaken in his experience.

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June 1944

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divisions. Now the Red Army's advance could no longer be halted
even in the summer. There can be no question that during these
weeks, when three fronts were collapsing—in the West, in the East,
and in the air—Hitler demonstrated steady nerves and an astonishing
capacity for perseverance. No doubt the long struggle for power, with
its many setbacks, had hardened his will as it had that of Goebbels
and other of his fellows of that period. Perhaps the experiences of the
"time of struggle," as it was always called, had taught him not to show
the slightest anxiety in the presence of his associates. His entourage
admired the composure he displayed at critical moments. That alone
contributed greatly to the confidence placed in his decisions. Obvi-
ously, he was always conscious of the many eyes watching him and
knew what discouragement he would have set in motion if he had lost
his composure even for a moment. This self-control remained an
extraordinary act of will to the last. He wrung it from himself in spite
of his rapid aging, in spite of illness, in spite of Morell's experiments,
and in spite of the ever greater burdens under which he staggered.
His will often seemed to me as heedless and crude as that of a six-
year-old child whom nothing can discourage or tire. But although it
was in some ways ridiculous, it also commanded respect.

This phenomenal confidence in victory in a period of repeated de-
feats cannot, however, be explained on the grounds of his energy
alone. In Spandau prison, Funk confided to me that the one reason
he, Funk, was able to deceive the doctors so consistently and credibly
about his health was that he believed his own lies. He added that this
attitude had been the basis of Goebbels's propaganda. Similarly, I
can only explain Hitler's rigid attitude on the grounds that he made
himself believe in his ultimate victory. In a sense he was worshipping
himself. He was forever holding up to himself a mirror in which he
saw not only himself but also the confirmation of his mission by
divine Providence. His religion was based on the "lucky break" which
must necessarily come his way; his method was to reinforce himself
by autosuggestion. The more events drove him into a corner, the
more obstinately he opposed to them his certainty about the inten-
tions of Fate. Naturally, he also soberly understood the military facts.
But he transmuted them by his own faith and regarded even defeat
as a secret guarantee, offered by Providence, of the coming victory.
Sometimes he could realize the hopelessness of a situation, but he
could not be shaken in his expectation that at the last moment Fate

D.T. My need for him was now as great
as his need for me — I was with
him constantly, and that provided

D.T.

D.T. I never did like
him much more.

D.T.

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would suddenly turn the tide in his favor. If there was any fundamental insanity in Hitler, it was this unshakable belief in his lucky star. He was by nature a religious man, but his capacity for belief had been perverted into belief in himself.¹⁸ See p 656

Hitler's obsessive faith inevitably influenced his entourage. One part of my consciousness certainly acknowledged that now everything must be approaching the end. But despite that, I spoke all the more frequently—though to be sure I spoke only for my own specific area—of “restoration of the situation.” Strangely, this confidence existed apart from the recognition of unavoidable defeat.

When on June 24, 1944, I still tried to impart confidence to others at an armaments conference in Linz, I ran into something of a stone wall. Rereading the text of my speech today, I am horrified by my recklessness. There was something grotesque about my effort to persuade serious men that supreme exertions might yet bring success. At the end of my remarks I voiced the conviction that in our field we would overcome the impending crisis, that in the coming year we would achieve as great an increase in armaments production as we had in the year just past. Speaking extemporaneously, I was carried away; I expressed hopes which in the light of reality were sheer fantasies. Events were in fact to prove that in the next few months we could increase our production. But why was I realistic enough at the same time to be sending a series of memoranda to Hitler on the impending, and finally on the imminent, end of all our efforts? The latter step was an act of intelligence, the former of pure faith. The complete separation between the two revealed that special kind of derangement with which everyone in Hitler's immediate entourage regarded the inevitable end.

Only the final sentence of my speech touched on the idea of a responsibility which went beyond personal loyalty, whether to Hitler or to my own associates. What I said may have sounded like a mere flourish, but I meant something by it: “We shall continue to do our duty so that our German people will be preserved.” It was, moreover, what this group of industrialists wanted to hear. In saying it I was for the first time publicly accepting that higher responsibility to which Rohland had appealed when he visited me in April. The idea had steadily grown stronger in my mind. I was beginning to see that here was a task still worth working for.

But it was clear that I had not convinced the businessmen. After

my talk, as well as during I heard many expressions of

Ten days earlier Hitler l industrialists. Now, after I more than ever that his speech

Before the war Bormann Platterhof in the vicinity of grims to Obersalzberg would even the privilege of spend June 26 about a hundred rg gathered in the coffee room Linz, I had noticed that th cerned with the increasing economic affairs. Actually, gaining more and more grou tionaries. They had already state distributed among the to their own district enterpr ground plants, which had b but whose directors, skilled vided by private industry, se after the war.¹⁴ Our very s terests of war production co state-socialist economic orde the more efficient it became, the instruments for the doom

I had asked Hitler to tak asked me for a few cue phra suggestion that he promise th in the critical period to cor protected against interferenc suggested that he affirm the though certain factories may temporary shift to undergro audience immensely if he we the war and a fundamental rej

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my talk, as well as during the succeeding days of the conference, I heard many expressions of hopelessness.

Ten days earlier Hitler had promised that he would address the industrialists. Now, after I myself had so signally failed, I hoped more than ever that his speech would lift the general morale.

Before the war Bormann, on Hitler's orders, had built the Hotel Platterhof in the vicinity of the Berghof so that the innumerable pilgrims to Obersalzberg would have a place to go for refreshment, or even the privilege of spending the night in Hitler's proximity. On June 26 about a hundred representatives of the armaments industry gathered in the coffee room of the Platterhof. During our sessions in Linz, I had noticed that their disgruntlement was also partly concerned with the increasing interference of the party apparatus in economic affairs. Actually, a kind of state socialism seemed to be gaining more and more ground, furthered by many of the party functionaries. They had already managed to have all plants owned by the state distributed among the various party districts and subordinated to their own district enterprises. In particular the numerous underground plants, which had been equipped and financed by the state, but whose directors, skilled workers, and machinery had been provided by private industry, seemed destined to fall under state control after the war.¹⁴ Our very system of industrial direction in the interests of war production could easily become the framework for a state-socialist economic order. The result was that our organization, the more efficient it became, was itself providing the party leaders with the instruments for the doom of private enterprise.

I had asked Hitler to take these anxieties into consideration. He asked me for a few cue phrases for his speech, and I noted down the suggestion that he promise the industrialists that they would be helped in the critical period to come, and furthermore that they would be protected against interference by local party authorities. Finally, I suggested that he affirm the "inviolability of private property even though certain factories may have become state property due to the temporary shift to underground quarters." It would reassure his audience immensely if he were to speak about "a free economy after the war and a fundamental rejection of nationalized industry."

Hitler made this speech and, by and large, took up these points. Yet all the while he was speaking, he sounded as if he were suffering from some impediment. He made frequent slips of the tongue, fum-

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bled for words, broke off sentences midway, neglected transitions, and sometimes became confused. The speech was testimony to his frightening state of exhaustion. This very day the situation on the invasion front had so deteriorated that nothing could any longer prevent the Allies from taking Cherbourg, the first big port. That would solve all their supply problems and would considerably increase the strength of the invading armies.

First of all, Hitler repudiated all ideological prejudices. "For there can be only one single rule, and this rule, put succinctly, is: That is correct which is useful in itself." In saying this he was upholding his own pragmatic way of thinking but undermining all his promises to industry.

Hitler gave free rein to his bent for historical philosophy and vague evolutionary theories. In muddled terms, he assured his audience that:

... the creative force not only shapes but also takes what it has shaped under its wing and directs it. This is what we generally mean by such phrases as private capital or private property or private possessions. Therefore the future will not belong, as the Communist holds, to the communist ideal of equality, but on the contrary, the farther humanity moves along the road of evolution, the more individualized achievements will be, from which it follows that the direction of what has been achieved will best be carried out by those who are themselves responsible for the achievements. . . . The basis for all real higher development, indeed for the further development of all mankind [will therefore be found], in the encouragement of private initiative. When this war has been decided by our victory, the private initiative of the German economy will enjoy the greatest era in its history. Think of all the creative work that will have to be done then! Don't imagine that all I shall do is set up a few state construction departments or a few state economic departments. . . . And when the great era of German peacetime business has dawned again, then I shall have only one interest, to put the greatest geniuses in German business to work. . . . I am grateful to you that you have helped me to meet our [wartime] tasks. But as the expression of my highest gratitude I want you to leave here with the assurance that I shall show my gratitude again and again and that no German will say that I harmed my own program. That is, when I tell you that after this war German business will experience its greatest

boom, perhaps of all times, that is that will one day be rede-

During this uneasy and disc any applause. We all felt st prompted him to change cours leaders by depicting what await

There is no doubt that if w business would not survive. R German people, business woul because our enemies do not w ficial view—but because funda volved in a struggle which w Either humanity will be throw tive condition, with mass pro or humanity will continue to c initiative.

A few minutes later he revert

If the war were lost, gentle about shifting [to a peacetime think about is how he himself to the hereafter. Whether he himself be hanged, or whether —these are some of the questio

Hitler had spoken these wor a faint undertone of contempt The audience understood—wh that this speech would spur the

Perhaps Hitler had been st haps warned by him. At any ; peacetime economy, which is v had promised me,¹⁶ had turne equivocal than I had expected were remarkable enough, I tho in our Ministry archives. Hitl

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The basis for all real higher elopment of all mankind [will ent of private initiative. When ry, the private initiative of the t era in its history. Think of all ne then! Don't imagine that all ion departments or a few state the great era of German peace- shall have only one interest, to iness to work. . . . I am grate- meet our [wartime] tasks. But e I want you to leave here with itude again and again and that own program. That is, when I iness will experience its greatest

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boom, perhaps of all times, then you must take these words as a promise that will one day be redeemed.

During this uneasy and disordered speech Hitler received scarcely any applause. We all felt stunned. Perhaps this lack of response prompted him to change course and attempt to frighten the industrial leaders by depicting what awaited them if the war were lost:

There is no doubt that if we were to lose this war, German private business would not survive. Rather, with the destruction of the entire German people, business would naturally be wiped out also. Not only because our enemies do not want German competition—this is a superficial view—but because fundamental matters are involved. We are involved in a struggle which will decide between two points of view: Either humanity will be thrown back several thousand years to a primitive condition, with mass production directed exclusively by the state, or humanity will continue to develop through the furthering of private initiative.

A few minutes later he reverted to this idea:

If the war were lost, gentlemen, then you would not have to worry about shifting [to a peacetime economy]. Then all anyone will have to think about is how he himself will accomplish his shift from this world to the hereafter. Whether he wants to take care of it himself, or let himself be hanged, or whether he prefers to starve or to labor in Siberia—these are some of the questions which the individual will have to face.

Hitler had spoken these words somewhat mockingly, certainly with a faint undertone of contempt for these "cowardly bourgeois souls." The audience understood—which was enough to destroy my hope that this speech would spur the business leaders to new efforts.

Perhaps Hitler had been stirred up by Bormann's presence; perhaps warned by him. At any rate, the declaration in favor of a free peacetime economy, which is what I had asked of Hitler and what he had promised me,¹⁵ had turned out a good deal less precise and unequivocal than I had expected. Still, several sentences in the speech were remarkable enough, I thought at the time, to be worth recording in our Ministry archives. Hitler, of his own accord, offered to let

still the work could not be continued on the priority level it should have had.

Some three months later, on January 7, 1944, Milch and I were urgently summoned to headquarters. Hitler had changed his mind, and this on the basis of an excerpt from the British press on the success of British experiments with jet planes. He was now impatient to have as many aircraft of this type as we could make in the shortest possible time. Since in the meantime Hitler had let everything lapse, we could promise to deliver no more than sixty planes a month from July 1944 on. From January 1945 on, however, we would be able to produce two hundred and ten aircraft a month.²

In the course of this conference Hitler indicated that he planned to use the plane, which was built to be a fighter, as a fast bomber. The air force specialists were dismayed, but imagined that their sensible arguments would prevail. What happened was just the opposite. Hitler obstinately ordered all weapons on board removed so that the aircraft could carry a greater weight of bombs. Jet planes did not have to defend themselves, he maintained, since with their superior speed they could not be attacked by enemy fighters. Deeply mistrustful of this new invention, he wanted it employed primarily for straight flight at great heights, to spare its wings and engines, and wanted the engineers to gear it to a somewhat reduced speed to lessen the strain on the still untried system.³

The effect of these tiny bombers, which could carry a load of little more than a thousand pounds of bombs and had only a primitive bombsight, was ridiculously insignificant. As fighter planes, on the other hand, each one of the jet aircraft would have been able, because of its superior performance, to shoot down several of the four-motored American bombers which in raid after raid were dropping thousands of tons of explosives on German cities.

At the end of June 1944, Goering and I once more tried to make Hitler see these points, but again in vain. Meanwhile air force pilots had tried out the new planes and were spoiling to use them against the American fleets of bombers. But here was one of these moments when Hitler's prejudices were insuperable. Planes of this sort, he said, seizing on any sophism, because of their speedy turns and rapid shifts of altitude, would expose the pilots to far greater physical strains than in the past; and, because of their higher speed the planes would be at a disadvantage against the slower and therefore

more agile enemy fighters.⁴ I higher than the American escotively clumsy American bombe immensely superior speed made more we tried to dissuade him: he held to it. To mollify us some future, when he would let the fighters.

It was true, of course, that only in a few prototypes. Never fluenced long-range military p been counting on this new type turning point in the air war. D of the war, everyone who could at all put in a word and tried to Model, Sepp Dietrich, and of c force, persistently took issue v they only brought his anger do this as an attack on his military In the autumn of 1944 he finally the whole controversy by flatly this subject.

When I telephoned General I air force, to inform him of wha mid-September report on the qu vided me not even to allude to the Me-262, Hitler was likely to would only be making trouble s that the air force chief of staff had

In spite of this warning I still that trying to make fighter plane less and, given our present mili phasized that this opinion was s army officers.⁵ But Hitler did not and after so many vain efforts I confined myself to worrying ov tions of how aircraft were to b than the choice of what type of pla

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1944, Milch and I were had changed his mind, British press on the subject. He was now impatient would make in the short term and let everything lapse, jet planes a month from now, we would be able to do it.²

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would carry a load of little and had only a primitive fighter planes, on the other hand would have been able, between the four-engine fighters. Several of the four-engine fighters were dropping bombs.

Once more tried to make the German air force pilots willing to use them against the enemy. It was one of these mobile. Planes of this sort, of their speedy turns and ability to make far greater physical turns of their higher speed than the slower and therefore

more agile enemy fighters.⁴ The fact that these planes could fly higher than the American escort fighters and could attack the relatively clumsy American bomber squadrons at will because of their immensely superior speed made no impression at all on Hitler. The more we tried to dissuade him from this notion, the more stubbornly he held to it. To mollify us somewhat he spoke of someday, far in the future, when he would let the aircraft be used, at least partially, as fighters.

It was true, of course, that the planes in question existed so far only in a few prototypes. Nevertheless, Hitler's order necessarily influenced long-range military planning, for the General Staff had been counting on this new type of fighter to bring about a decisive turning point in the air war. Desperate as we were over this aspect of the war, everyone who could claim any knowledge of the subject at all put in a word and tried to change Hitler's mind. Jodl, Guderian, Model, Sepp Dietrich, and of course the leading generals of the air force, persistently took issue with Hitler's layman's opinion. But they only brought his anger down on their heads, since he took all this as an attack on his military expertise and technical intelligence. In the autumn of 1944 he finally and characteristically brushed aside the whole controversy by flatly forbidding any further discussion of this subject.

When I telephoned General Kreipe, the new chief of staff of the air force, to inform him of what I wanted to write to Hitler in my mid-September report on the question of jet planes, he strongly advised me not even to allude to the matter. At the very mention of the Me-262, Hitler was likely to fly off the handle, he said. And I would only be making trouble for him, since Hitler would assume that the air force chief of staff had put me up to it.

In spite of this warning I still felt I had to tell Hitler once more that trying to make fighter planes serve as bombers would be pointless and, given our present military situation, a grave error. I emphasized that this opinion was shared by the pilots and by all the army officers.⁵ But Hitler did not even discuss my recommendations, and after so many vain efforts I simply withdrew from the fray and confined myself to worrying over my own work. Actually, questions of how aircraft were to be used were no more my business than the choice of what type of plane to produce.

1944

The jet plane was not the only effective new weapon that could have been slated for mass production in 1944. We possessed a remote-controlled flying bomb, a rocket plane that was even faster than the jet plane, a rocket missile that homed on an enemy plane by tracking the heat rays from its motors, and a torpedo that reacted to sound and could thus pursue and hit a ship fleeing in a zigzag course. Development of a ground-to-air missile had been completed. The designer Lippisch had jet planes on the drawing board that were far in advance of anything so far known, based as they were on the all-wing principle.

We were literally suffering from an excess of projects in development. Had we concentrated on only a few types we would surely have completed some of them sooner. At one point the various departments in charge of these matters held council and decided not so much to seek new ideas in the future as to select from the existing ideas those which we were in a position to develop and to push these vigorously.

Once again it was Hitler who, in spite of all the tactical mistakes of the Allies, ordained those very moves which helped the enemy air offensive in 1944 achieve its successes. After postponing the development of the jet fighter and later converting it into a light bomber, Hitler now decided to use our big new rockets to retaliate against England. From the end of July 1943 on tremendous industrial capacity was diverted to the huge missile later known as the V-2: a rocket forty-six feet long and weighing more than thirteen metric tons. Hitler wanted to have nine hundred of these produced monthly.

The whole notion was absurd. The fleets of enemy bombers in 1944 were dropping an average of three thousand tons of bombs a day over a span of several months. And Hitler wanted to retaliate with thirty rockets that would have carried twenty-four tons of explosives to England daily. That was equivalent to the bomb load of only twelve Flying Fortresses.^o

I not only went along with this decision on Hitler's part but also supported it. That was probably one of my most serious mistakes. We would have done much better to focus our efforts on manufacturing a ground-to-air defensive rocket. It had already been developed in 1942, under the code name Waterfall, to such a point that mass production would soon have been possible, had we utilized

the talents of those technical development at Peenemünde.

Approximately twenty-five capable of carrying approximately plosives along a directional feet and hit enemy bombers by day or night, by clouds, turn out nine hundred of them surely have produced several expensive rockets per month.

* Even aside from Hitler's ob would have been complicated weapons for the army, whereas the conflict of interests and the the army would never have all had built up in Peenemünde. The and development to be conducted 16). Project Waterfall could Peenemünde's full capacity been were 2210 scientists and engineers A-9, whereas only 220 had been aircraft rocket project, Typhoon Professor C. Krauch, the commander a detailed memorandum on an unfortunate decision, offering the

Those who advocate accelerating on the principle that the attacks against England will be flown against the Reich. Even were available in unlimited quantities experience suggests that this reliance in England who face against Germany's civilian population rocket attacks, to urge their government densely populated areas. We sort. . . . Such considerations on antiaircraft weaponry, on the to deploy it at once and on a large every worker, and every man will yield results proportionate the same resources invested in can mean the difference between

ratio of 1 to 120.
D.F. as he saw it, the proportion of
damage would be 100 to 1 in its favor
Heavy Bomber production

apathy and lack
with the cooperation
was greatly
Hitler's group

1944, 1942

junction with the jet fighters, would have beaten back the Western Allies' air offensive against our industry from the spring of 1944 on. Instead, gigantic effort and expense went into developing and manufacturing long-range rockets which proved to be, when they were at last ready for use in the autumn of 1944, an almost total failure. Our most expensive project was also our most foolish one. Those rockets, which were our pride and for a time my favorite armaments project, proved to be nothing but a mistaken investment. On top of that, they were one of the reasons we lost the defensive war in the air.

Ever since the winter of 1939, I had been closely associated with the Peenemünde development center, although at first all I was doing was meeting its construction needs. I liked mingling with this circle of nonpolitical young scientists and investors headed by Wernher von Braun—twenty-seven years old, purposeful, a man realistically at home in the future. It was extraordinary that so young and untried a team should be allowed to pursue a project costing hundreds of millions of marks and whose realization seemed far away. Under the somewhat paternalistic direction of Colonel Walter Dornberger these young men were able to work unhampered by bureaucratic obstacles and pursue ideas which at times sounded thoroughly utopian.

The work, mere glimmerings of which were being sketched out in 1939, also exerted a strange fascination upon me. It was like the planning of a miracle. I was impressed anew by these technicians with their fantastic visions, these mathematical romantics. Whenever I visited Peenemünde I also felt, quite spontaneously, somehow akin to them. My sympathy stood them in good stead when in the late fall of 1939 Hitler crossed the rocket project off his list of urgent undertakings and thus automatically cut off its labor and materials. By tacit agreement with the Army Ordnance Office, I continued to build the Peenemünde installations without its approval—a liberty that probably no one but myself could have taken.

After my appointment as Minister of Armaments, I naturally took a keener interest in this great project. Hitler, however, continued to be exceedingly skeptical. He was filled with a fundamental distrust of all innovations which, as in the case of jet aircraft or atom bombs, went beyond the technical experience of the First World War generation and presaged an era he could not know.

On June 13, 1942, the armaments chiefs of the three branches of

the armed forces, Field Marshal I. Fromm, flew to Peenemünde with remote-controlled rocket. Before towered an unreal-looking missile, Wernher von Braun, and over this first launching as we inventor was placing on this experiment was not the development of a new technology.

Wisps of vapor showed that the predetermined second, at first with the roar of an unleashed giant, then seemed to stand upon its jet of fire then vanished with a howl into the sky. It was beaming. For my part, I witnessed a miracle, at its precision and at the defiance of gravity, so that thirteen tons could be guided by any mechanical guidance.

The technicians were just explaining the projectile was covering when, a minute later, a swelling howl indicated that the rocket had reached its vicinity. We all froze where we stood, a mile away. The guidance system had never been solved: getting it off the ground had been solved; getting it off the ground continued to have the "gravest difficulty." No guidance capability could ever be developed.

On October 14, 1942, I was at Peenemünde. The second rocket launch was scribed course of one hundred and fifty miles within two and a half miles of the target. The man's inventive mind had grazed the target of sixty miles. It seemed like a miracle at this point did Hitler, too, show interest. He underwent instant inflation. He put into action a flock of five thousand rockets "available for wholesale commitment."

* See *Führerprotokoll*, October 13-14, 1942.

4 mo. later

production. On December this effect, although the it before it could lend risk rushing matters in and the promises from o be available by July duction.

and Dornberger and von The Fuehrer wanted to t. After Hitler had fin- together over to the Braun's assistants were s darkened and a color majestic spectacle of a ag into the stratosphere. h sounding enthusiasm, be no question about it: won over. Dornberger ns, while I proposed to sor. "Yes, arrange that ely. "I'll even sign the

dingly cordial good-by. had been kindled. Back the possibilities of this ide the war. And what attack the English with l what is more it can be er, you must push the aterials they need must ; to sign the decree for : Change it around and tank production. But," can use only Germans. siness."⁹

would have delivered only ined British and American

There was only one point on which he pressed me, when we were alone again. "Weren't you mistaken? You say this young man is thirty-one? I would have thought him even younger!" He thought it astonishing that so young a man could already have helped to bring about a technical breakthrough which would change the face of the future. From then on he would sometimes expatiate on his thesis that in our century people squandered the best years of their lives on useless things. In past eras an Alexander the Great had conquered a vast empire at the age of twenty-three and Napoleon had won his brilliant victories at thirty. In connection with this he would often allude, as if casually, to Wernher von Braun, who at so young an age had created a technical marvel at Peenemünde.

In the autumn of 1943 it turned out that our expectations had been premature. The final blueprints had not been delivered in July, as promised, so that we were not able to go into mass production immediately. A great many sources of error had been discovered. In particular, when the first rockets with warheads were fired, there were inexplicable premature explosions when the missile reentered the atmosphere.¹⁰ There were still many questions unsolved, I warned in a speech on October 6, 1943, so that it would be premature "to count with certainty on this new weapon." I added that the technical difference between individual manufacture and mass production, considerable enough in itself, would involve special difficulties in the case of these highly complicated mechanisms.

Almost a year passed. At the beginning of September 1944 the first rockets were fired at England. Not, as Hitler had imagined, five thousand at one blow, but twenty-five, and then not at one blow but over a period of ten days.

After Hitler had become excited over the V-2 project, Himmler entered the picture. Six weeks later he came to Hitler to propose the simplest way to guarantee secrecy for this vital program. If the entire work force were concentration camp prisoners, all contact with the outside world would be eliminated. Such prisoners did not even have any mail, Himmler said. Along with this, he offered to provide all necessary technicians from the ranks of the prisoners. All industry would have to furnish would be the management and the engineers.

Hitler agreed to this plan. And Saur and I had no choice, especially since we could not offer a more persuasive arrangement.¹¹

Sept 1944

The result was that we had to work out guidelines for a joint undertaking with the SS leadership—what was to be called the Central Works. My assistants went into it reluctantly, and their fears were soon confirmed. Formally speaking, we remained in charge of the manufacturing; but in cases of doubt we had to yield to the superior power of the SS leadership. Thus, Himmler had put a foot in our door, and we ourselves had helped him do it.

Himmler had conferred an honorary rank in the SS upon almost every government minister whose personal or political weight he had to reckon with. He had reserved a particularly high distinction for me; he wanted to make me an SS Oberstgruppenführer, a rank corresponding to that of a full general in the army and one very rarely conferred. But although he let me know how unusual the honor was, I refused his offer with polite phrases. I pointed out that the army¹² as well as the SA and the NSKK had in vain offered me high titular ranks. In order to make my refusal sound less challenging, I volunteered to reactivate my former ordinary membership in the Mannheim SS—not suspecting that I had not even been listed as a member there.

By conferring such ranks Himmler of course meant to gain influence and thrust his way into areas not yet under his command. My suspicions proved only too justified: Himmler promptly made every effort to push his way into the field of armaments production. He readily offered countless prisoners and as early as 1942 began placing pressure on a number of my assistants. As far as we could make out, he wanted to turn the concentration camps into large modern factories, especially for armaments, with the SS continuing to have direct control of them. General Fromm at the time called my attention to the perils of this for orderly production of armaments, and Hitler made it clear he was on my side. After all, we had had certain dismal experiences before the war with such SS projects, which had promised us bricks and granite. On September 21, 1942, Hitler ruled on the matter. The prisoners were to work in factories under the direction of the industrial armaments organization. Himmler's expansionist drive had been curbed for the present, at least in this field.¹³

At first the factory managers complained that the prisoners arrived in a weakened condition and after a few months had to be sent back, exhausted, to the regular camps. Since their training time alone required several weeks and instructors were scarce, we could not afford

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June 1944

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sorts of fantastic drawings based on their visions. When Hitler visited me at my sickbed in Klessheim and treated me with such surprising benevolence, I took this occasion to intercede for the arrested specialists, and had Hitler promise that he would get them released. But a week was to pass before this was done, and as much as six weeks later Hitler was still grumbling about the trouble he had gone to. As he phrased it, von Braun was to be "protected from all prosecution as long as he is indispensable, difficult though the general consequences arising from the situation" were. Actually, Himmler had achieved one of his ends. From now on even the top men of the rocket staff no longer felt safe from his arbitrary hand. It was conceivable, after all, that I might not always be in a position to free them if they were arrested again.

Himmler had long been striving to set up a business firm which would be the property of the SS. Hitler, or so it seemed to me, was cool to the idea, and I did my best to reinforce him in this. Perhaps this conflict was one of the reasons for Himmler's strange conduct during my illness. For during those months he had at last managed to persuade Hitler that a large-scale SS business enterprise would offer numerous advantages. At the beginning of June 1944, Hitler asked me to assist the SS in its efforts to build up an economic empire extending from raw materials to manufacturing. He had a strange reason, now, for furthering this enterprise: The SS must be strong enough so that under his successors it would be able, for example, to oppose a Finance Minister who wanted to cut its funds.

What followed from this was precisely what I had feared at the beginning of my work as Minister of Armaments. At least I was able to put across the point that Himmler's manufacturing sites "must be subject to the same control as the rest of the armaments and war-production industry," lest "one part of the armed forces go its own independent way when I have managed by great effort over two years to coordinate armaments production for the other three branches of the armed forces."¹⁷ Hitler promised to back me if I had trouble with Himmler, but I had great doubts about the strength of such backing. Significantly enough Himmler had had a report from Hitler on this conversation at the time the Reichsführer-SS asked me to his house near Berchtesgaden.

It is true that the Reichsführer-SS sometimes seemed to be a vi-

June 1944

sionary whose intellectual flights struck even Hitler as ridiculous. But Himmler was also a sober-minded realist who knew exactly what his far-reaching political aims were. In our discussions he displayed a friendly courtesy that seemed slightly forced and never cordial. And he always made a point of having a witness from his staff present. He had the patience to listen to his visitors' arguments—a gift rare in those days. In the discussion he often seemed petty and pedantic and had apparently thought out beforehand everything he wanted to say. He was obviously not concerned with the impression this made, that he seemed slow-minded let alone of limited intelligence. His office worked with the precision of a well-oiled machine—which was probably an expression of his own impersonality. At any rate I always felt that his pallid character was reflected in the utterly matter-of-fact style of his secretariat. His stenographers, all young girls, could certainly not be called pretty, but they all seemed to be extremely hard-working and conscientious.

Himmler presented me with a well-thought-out and wide-ranging plan. During my illness the SS, in spite of all Saur's efforts to oppose it, had acquired the Hungarian concern of Manfred-Weiss, an important armaments company. With this as a core, Himmler explained, he wanted systematically to construct a steadily expanding cartel. Would I suggest a specialist to help with the construction of this giant enterprise? After reflecting briefly, I proposed Paul Pleiger, who had set up large steel mills for the Four-Year Plan. Pleiger was an energetic and independent man who, with his manifold ties to industry, would be able to ensure that Himmler did not expand his concern too vigorously and too unscrupulously. But Himmler did not like my nominee. That was the last time he asked me for advice.

Himmler's close associates Oswald Pohl, Hans Jüttner, and Gottlob Berger were tough and ruthless in negotiation, but moderately good-natured. They had that kind of banality which seems quite tolerable at first sight. But two of his other men were surrounded by an aura of iciness like that of their chief: Both Reinhard Heydrich and Hans Kammler were blond, blue-eyed, long-headed, always neatly dressed, and well bred. Both were capable of unexpected decisions at any moment, and once they had arrived at them they would carry them through with a rare obstinacy. Himmler had made a significant choice in picking Kammler as his aide. For in spite of all his ideological crankiness, in matters of personnel Himmler was not

overly concerned about being interested in such qualities as zeal. In the spring of 1942, I had previously been a high-rank Ministry, to head the SS corner of 1943 he chose him to be of my enforced collaboration a cold, ruthless schemer, a carefully calculating as he was

Himmler heaped assignment's presence at every opportunity Himmler was trying to build the time I had seen only the bare his objective coolness. In many possibly my rival, he was in him in many ways my mirror image, class family, had gone through because of his work in constant fields for which he had not been

During the war the supply industrial unit. At the beginning a faster and faster pace, the SS and making sure they were kept Walter Schieber, one of my de the efforts of the SS to use its economic expansion. More foreign workers in our factories in arresting them for trivial violations to its own camps.* My assistants were being deprived of thirty during the spring of 1944.

At the beginning of June 19

* Dr. Schieber states further: "The number of the many foreign and special plants. This drain is caused by economic interests, which is being prevented by Pohl." At the meeting of Kammler had boasted that he had protective custody in order to obtain

* D.T. His indifference to female beauty was his strength. His agent, unlike myself, came from a different arena and was indeed involved with

a different purpose.

May 1944

445 L Blunders, Secret Weapons, and the SS

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Himmler was not

overly concerned about lengthy party membership. He was more interested in such qualities as energy, swift intelligence, and extreme zeal. In the spring of 1942, Himmler had appointed Kammler, who had previously been a high-ranking construction employee in the Air Ministry, to head the SS construction operations, and in the summer of 1943 he chose him to handle the rocket program. In the course of my enforced collaboration with this man, I discovered him to be a cold, ruthless schemer, a fanatic in the pursuit of a goal, and as carefully calculating as he was unscrupulous.

Himmler heaped assignments on him and brought him into Hitler's presence at every opportunity. Soon rumors were afloat that Himmler was trying to build up Kammler to be my successor.¹⁸ At the time I had seen only the best side of Kammler, and I rather liked his objective coolness. In many jobs my partner, in his intentions possibly my rival, he was in his career as well as his manner of work in many ways my mirror image. He too came from a solid middle-class family, had gone through the university, had been "discovered" because of his work in construction, and had gone far and fast in fields for which he had not been trained.

During the war the supply of labor became the key factor in any industrial unit. At the beginning of the forties, and subsequently at a faster and faster pace, the SS began secretly building labor camps and making sure they were kept full. In a letter of May 7, 1944, Walter Schieber, one of my department heads, called my attention to the efforts of the SS to use its powers over labor in order to promote its economic expansion. Moreover, the SS was casting eyes on the foreign workers in our factories and became more and more zealous in arresting them for trivial violations of rules and transferring them to its own camps.* My assistants estimated that by this technique we were being deprived of thirty to forty thousand workers a month during the spring of 1944.

At the beginning of June 1944, I protested to Hitler that I could

* Dr. Schieber states further: "The SS siphons off by now a significant number of the many foreign and especially Russian workers who man the armaments plants. This drain is caused by the constant growth of the extensive SS economic interests, which is being promoted with particular zeal by Obergruppenführer Pohl." At the meeting of the Armaments Staff on May 26, 1944, Kammler had boasted that he had "simply placed fifty thousand persons in protective custody in order to obtain the necessary labor" for the SS enterprises.

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Summer 1944

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ing the chances of more people for survival. Paradoxically, I would feel better today if in this sense I had been guiltier. But what preys on my mind nowadays has little to do with the standards of Nuremberg nor the figures on lives I saved or might have saved. For in either case I was moving within the system. What disturbs me more is that I failed to read the physiognomy of the regime mirrored in the faces of those prisoners—the regime whose existence I was so obsessively trying to prolong during those weeks and months. I did not see any moral ground outside the system where I should have taken my stand. And sometimes I ask myself who this young man really was, this young man who has now become so alien to me, who walked through the workshops of the Linz steelworks or descended into the caverns of the Central Works twenty-five years ago.

One day, some time in the summer of 1944, my friend Karl Hanke, the Gauleiter of Lower Silesia, came to see me. In earlier years he had told me a great deal about the Polish and French campaigns, had spoken of the dead and wounded, the pain and agonies, and in talking about these things had shown himself a man of sympathy and directness. This time, sitting in the green leather easy chair in my office, he seemed confused and spoke falteringly, with many breaks. He advised me never to accept an invitation to inspect a concentration camp in Upper Silesia. Never, under any circumstances. He had seen something there which he was not permitted to describe and moreover could not describe.

I did not query him, I did not query Himmler, I did not query Hitler, I did not speak with personal friends. I did not investigate—for I did not want to know what was happening there. Hanke must have been speaking of Auschwitz. During those few seconds, while Hanke was warning me, the whole responsibility had become a reality again. Those seconds were uppermost in my mind when I stated to the international court at the Nuremberg Trial that as an important member of the leadership of the Reich, I had to share the total responsibility for all that had happened. For from that moment on, I was inescapably contaminated morally; from fear of discovering something which might have made me turn from my course, I had closed my eyes. This deliberate blindness outweighs whatever good I may have done or tried to do in the last period of the war. Those activities shrink to nothing in the face of it. Because I failed at that time, I still feel, to this day, responsible for Auschwitz in a wholly personal sense.

July 1944

me to work closely and confidentially with Stauffenberg. In spite of his war injuries (he had lost an eye, his right hand, and two fingers of his left hand), Stauffenberg had preserved a youthful charm; he was curiously poetic and at the same time precise, thus showing the marks of the two major and seemingly incompatible educational influences upon him: the circle around the poet Stefan George and the General Staff. He and I would have hit it off even without Schmundt's recommendation. After the deed which will forever be associated with his name, I often reflected upon his personality and found no phrase more fitting for him than this one of Hölderlin's: "An extremely unnatural, paradoxical character unless one sees him in the midst of those circumstances which imposed so strict a form upon his gentle spirit."

There were further sessions of these conferences on July 6 and 8. Along with Hitler, Keitel, Fromm, and other officers sat at the round table by the big window in the Berghof salon. Stauffenberg had taken his seat beside me, with his remarkably plump briefcase. He explained the Valkyrie plan for committing the Home Army. Hitler listened attentively and in the ensuing discussion approved most of the proposals. Finally, he decided that in military actions within the Reich the military commanders would have full executive powers, the political authorities—which meant principally the Gauleiters in their capacity of Reich Defense Commissioners—only advisory functions. The military commanders, the decree went, could directly issue all requisite instructions to Reich and local authorities without consulting the Gauleiters.⁵

Whether by chance or design, at this period most of the prominent military members of the conspiracy were assembled in Berchtesgaden. As I know now, they and Stauffenberg had decided only a few days before to attempt to assassinate Hitler with a bomb kept in readiness by Brigadier General Stieff. On July 8, I met General Friedrich Olbricht to discuss the drafting of deferred workers for the army; up to now Keitel and I had been at odds over this question. As so often, Olbricht complained again about the difficulties that inevitably arose from the armed forces being split into four services. Were it not for the jealousies of the different branches, the army could avail itself of hundreds of thousands of young soldiers now in the air force, he said.

The next day, I met Quartermaster General Eduard Wagner at the

Berchtesgadener Hof, along with General Fritz Lindemann, General Helmut Stief, the High Command of the Luftwaffe, and none of the conspiracy and none of the coup d'état had now but a rather reckless state of mind for some great resolution. My attitude at the way they belittled the matter according to the Quartermaster General. The generals treat the east as a matter of no importance."⁶

One or two weeks before the situation in the blackest corner would have to make upon Hitler's retreat. These were so far from being met, and I am inclined to show Hitler that the air force weapons and that we there were. I was not present at the time he had scolded the much older with Hitler joining in. Now, unchanged friendliness, only did not seem to worry him any more.

We discussed in detail the Luftwaffe organization. General Wever and his men and materials caused so much trouble for the armed forces maintained a small air force and the army, for example, the way to Athens or Lapland. A laboration on such projects would not hear of any changes of the advantages which the armaments production for all time.

Although I had often had conversations with the conspirators, I did not catch the sense that something was being done with them. It was rather because

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nades at their belts and submachine guns in their hands, moving toward the Brandenburg Gate in small, battle-ready groups. They set up machine guns at the gate and stopped all traffic. Meanwhile, two heavily armed men went up to the door at the wall along the park and stood guard there. I summoned Goebbels. He understood the significance at once, vanished into his adjacent bedroom, took a few pills from a box, and put them into his coat pocket. "Well, just in case!" he said, with visible tension.

We sent an adjutant to find out what orders these sentries had. But we did not learn much. The soldiers at the wall proved to be uncommunicative. Finally, one of them said curtly: "No one is entering or leaving here."

The telephone calls Goebbels was making indefatigably in all directions provided confusing news. Troops from Potsdam were already on the march toward Berlin; garrisons from the provinces were also moving up, we heard. In myself, in spite of my spontaneous repudiation of the uprising, was a curious feeling of merely being there as a nonparticipant, as if all this hectic activity on the part of a nervous and resolute Goebbels did not concern me. At times the situation seemed rather hopeless, and Goebbels showed extreme anxiety. But since the telephone was still functioning and the radio had not yet broadcast any proclamations by the rebels, Goebbels concluded that the other side was still uncertain.

It was incomprehensible that the conspirators failed to stop communications or to seize them for their own use. Weeks before they had worked out a detailed schedule which included the arrest of Goebbels, occupation of the Berlin long-distance telephone office, the main telegraph office, the SS communications center, the central post office, the major broadcasting facilities around Berlin, and the radio station in Charlottenburg.⁸ Only a few soldiers would have been needed to break into Goebbels's office and arrest the minister without resistance; a few revolvers were all the protection and arms we had. Goebbels would probably have tried to escape capture by taking the potassium cyanide he had in readiness. Thus, the most competent antagonist to the conspirators would have been put out of action.

Amazingly enough, during these critical hours Goebbels could not reach Himmler, who alone possessed reliable units that might have suppressed the putsch. Himmler had quite obviously withdrawn, and

Goebbels was all the more try though he might, see an eral times he expressed his ister of the Interior. It h uncertainties of those few I doubt about the reliability of

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Goebbels was all the more disturbed by that because he could not, try though he might, see any apparent motive for such conduct. Several times he expressed his distrust of the Reichsführer-SS and Minister of the Interior. It has always seemed to me a sign of the uncertainties of those few hours that Goebbels could have revealed doubt about the reliability of even such a man as Himmler.

Was Goebbels also suspicious of me when he banished me to an adjoining room during a telephone call? He hardly took the trouble to conceal his skepticism toward me. Afterward, the thought occurred to me that perhaps he had wanted me there with him so that he could keep watch on me—all the more so since suspicion was already directed toward Stauffenberg and therefore, inevitably, toward Fromm as his superior officer. After all, Goebbels was aware of my friendship with Fromm, whom he had long openly referred to as an "enemy of the party."

I also thought of Fromm immediately. When Goebbels sent me out of his room, I called the switchboard at Bendlerstrasse and asked for Fromm, thinking that I could most easily find out from him what was happening. "General Fromm is not available," I was informed. I did not know that at this time he was already locked up in a room at Bendlerstrasse. "Then connect me with his adjutant." No one answered at the adjutant's telephone, I was told. "Then General Olbricht, please."

Olbricht came to the phone at once. "What is going on, General?" I asked him in that joking tone customary between us, which often cut through difficult situations. "I have work to do and am being kept here at Goebbels's office by soldiers."

Olbricht apologized. "Sorry, in your case it's a mistake. I'll put that right in a moment." He hung up before I could ask any more questions. I did not tell Goebbels about this phone call. The tone and the content of it suggested an understanding with Olbricht which might arouse further mistrust in Goebbels.

Meanwhile Schacht, the deputy Gauleiter of Berlin, entered the room where I was waiting. Someone named Hagen had just spoken to him and vouched for the National Socialist principles of Major Remer, whose battalion had encircled the government quarter. Goebbels's first thought was to persuade Remer to come and talk with him. As soon as he learned that Remer was willing, Goebbels admitted me to his office again. He was sure he could win Remer over

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to his side and asked me to be present. Hitler, he said, had been informed of this impending conversation; he was awaiting the results at headquarters and would be prepared to talk with the major himself at any time.

Major Remer entered. Goebbels seemed controlled, but nervous. He seemed to sense that everything hung on this, the fate of the uprising, and thus his own fate as well. After a few remarkably undramatic minutes, it was all over and the putsch lost.

First, Goebbels reminded the major of his oath to the Fuehrer. Remer replied by vowing his loyalty to Hitler and the party. But, he added, Hitler was dead. Consequently, he must obey the orders of his commander, Major General von Haase. Goebbels retorted with the ringing words: "The Fuehrer is alive!" Seeing that Remer was at first taken aback and then became obviously unsure of himself, Goebbels added at once: "He's alive. I spoke to him a few minutes ago. An ambitious little clique of generals has begun this military putsch. A filthy trick. The filthiest trick in history."

The news that Hitler was still living was evidently an enormous relief to this perplexed young man, recipient of an incomprehensible order to cordon off the government quarter. Happy, but still incredulous, Remer stared at all of us. Goebbels now pointed out to Remer that this was an historic hour, that a tremendous responsibility before history rested on his shoulders. Rarely had destiny afforded a single man such a chance, Goebbels said; it was up to him whether to use it or throw it away.

You had only to see Remer now to observe the change in him that these words produced, to realize that Goebbels had already won. But now the Propaganda Minister played his highest card: "I am going to talk to the Fuehrer now, and you can speak with him too. The Fuehrer can give you orders that rescind your general's orders, can't he?" Goebbels concluded in a faintly sarcastic tone. Then he put through the connection to Rastenburg.

The telephone switchboard in his Ministry had a special line direct to the Fuehrer's headquarters. Within seconds Hitler was on the phone. After a few remarks about the situation Goebbels handed the receiver to the major. Remer immediately recognized Hitler's voice, and receiver in hand involuntarily snapped to attention. We could hear only the repeated phrases: "*Jawohl, mein Fuehrer. . . . Jawohl!*"

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In keeping with the whether this brigade be Goebbels and Remer t pant in the putsch.⁹ I brinker. Since I knew The message I received the rebellion.

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ing on the men gathered in a semicircle around him, and listening, not to commands and threats, but to a plea to their long-conditioned loyalty.

Toward eleven o'clock, Colonel Bollbrinker came into the room where Goebbels had installed me. The conspirators had been arrested, Bollbrinker said, and back at Bendlerstrasse, Fromm wanted to hold a summary court-martial of the lot of them. I realized at once that such an act would seriously incriminate Fromm. Moreover, it seemed to me that Hitler himself ought to decide what was to be done with the rebels. Shortly after midnight I hurriedly drove off to prevent the executions. Bollbrinker and Remer sat in my car. In totally blacked-out Berlin the Bendlerstrasse headquarters was illuminated by searchlights—an unreal and ghostly scene. It also seemed as theatrical as a movie backdrop brightly lit inside a dark studio. Long, sharp shadows made the building look exceedingly solid and sculptured.

As I was about to turn into Bendlerstrasse, an SS officer signaled to me to stop at the curb on Tiergartenstrasse. Almost unrecognizable in the darkness under the trees stood Kaltenbrunner, the Gestapo chief, and Skorzeny, the man who had liberated Mussolini, surrounded by numerous subordinates. These dark figures looked like phantoms and behaved as such. When we greeted them, no one clicked his heels; the usual paraded briskness had vanished. Everything seemed muted; even the conversation was conducted in lowered voices, as at a funeral. I explained to Kaltenbrunner that I had come to stop Fromm's summary court-martial. I had rather expected Kaltenbrunner and Skorzeny would execrate the army, which they had always regarded as their rival, or at any rate gloat over its moral defeat. But both men replied in a fairly indifferent tone that whatever happened was primarily the army's business. "We don't want to get involved and certainly will not interfere. In any case, the summary court-martial has probably taken place already."

Kaltenbrunner informed me that no SS forces would be used to suppress the rebellion or to carry out punishments. He had even forbidden his men to enter the Bendlerstrasse headquarters, he said. Any interference by the SS would inevitably produce fresh trouble with the army and increase the existing tensions.¹⁰ But such tactical considerations, product of the moment, proved to be short-lived. Only

a few hours later the pursuing army officers by various organs.

Kaltenbrunner had scarcely appeared against the brightly lit strasse. In full uniform, all at steps. I bade good-by to emerged from the darkness. "It is finished," he began, contr just issued the necessary cor For a time I was prevented Home Army. They actually my closest associates!" Indign detectable as, his voice grew execution of his staff. "As to hold a summary court-martial rebellion." His voice dropping eral Olbricht and my chief longer living."

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June 1944

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Kaltenbrunner had scarcely finished talking when a massive shadow appeared against the brightly illuminated background of the Bendlerstrasse. In full uniform, all alone, Fromm approached us with leaden steps. I bade good-bye to Kaltenbrunner and his followers and emerged from the darkness of the trees toward Fromm. "The putsch is finished," he began, controlling himself with stern effort. "I have just issued the necessary commands to all corps area headquarters. For a time I was prevented from exercising my command of the Home Army. They actually locked me in a room. My chief of staff, my closest associates!" Indignation and a measure of uneasiness were detectable as, his voice growing steadily louder, he justified his execution of his staff. "As their appointing authority, it was my duty to hold a summary court-martial immediately of all participants in the rebellion." His voice dropping to a pained murmur, he added: "General Olbricht and my chief of staff, Colonel Stauffenberg, are no longer living."

The first thing Fromm wanted to do was to telephone Hitler. In vain I asked him to come to my Ministry first. He insisted on seeing Goebbels, although he knew as well as I that the Propaganda Minister disliked and distrusted him.

At Goebbels's residence, General Haase, the city commandant of Berlin, was already under arrest. In my presence Fromm briefly explained the events and asked Goebbels to connect him with Hitler. Goebbels, instead of replying, asked Fromm to go into another room; then he put through the call to Hitler. At this point, he asked me to leave also. After about twenty minutes he came to the door and summoned a guard whom he posted in front of Fromm's room.

It was already after midnight when Himmler, whom nobody had been able to locate up to this point, arrived at Goebbels's residence. In detail, and before being asked, he justified his absence.* There was a tried and true rule for dealing with uprisings, he said. You had to keep away from the center and conduct the counteractions from outside. That was the proper strategy.

* Himmler apparently hesitated to obey Hitler's order, issued at 5 P.M., that he return to Berlin. At first Himmler stayed in his headquarters; he did not land in Berlin until late in the evening, and then avoided Tempelhof Airfield, choosing an obscure landing strip outside the city.

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Goebbels seemed to accept this. He appeared to be in the best of humor and gave Himmler a detailed account of the events in which he dramatized how he had mastered the situation virtually by himself. "If they hadn't been so clumsy! They had an enormous chance. What dolts! What childishness! When I think how I would have handled such a thing. Why didn't they occupy the radio station and spread the wildest lies? Here they put guards in front of my door. But they let me go right ahead and telephone the Fuehrer, mobilize everything! They didn't even silence my telephone. To hold so many trumps and botch it—what beginners!"

Those military men, he continued, had relied too heavily on the traditional concept of obedience and had taken it for granted that every order would be carried out by the subordinate officers and men. That alone had doomed the putsch to failure. For they had forgotten, he added with cool self-congratulation, that in recent years the National Socialist state had educated the Germans to think politically. "It's simply no longer possible nowadays to make them follow the orders of a clique of generals like so many puppets." Abruptly, Goebbels stopped. As though my presence had become an embarrassment he said: "I have several questions to discuss with the Reichsfuehrer alone, my dear Herr Speer. Good night."

On the next day, July 21, the important ministers were invited to the Fuehrer's headquarters to present their congratulations. Appended to my invitation was the request that I bring Dorsch and Saur, my two principal assistants, along with me—an unusual request, since all the other ministers came without their deputies. At the reception Hitler greeted them with pronounced cordiality, whereas he passed by me with a careless handshake. Hitler's entourage also behaved with inexplicable coolness. As soon as I entered a room, the conversation ceased and those in the room left or turned away. Schaub, Hitler's civilian adjutant, said meaningfully to me: "Now we know who was behind the assassination attempt." Then he walked out on me. I could learn no more. Saur and Dorsch were even invited to the afternoon tea in the intimate circle without me. Everything was very strange. I was greatly disturbed.

Keitel, on the other hand, had at last emerged from the clouds which had been gathering about him in the past weeks, due to the criticism of him by members of the entourage. When he picked him-

self up out of the dust immediately standing there relatively uninjured now repeatedly related, excitedly, "you're alive!" and ignoring all. It was clear that after that Hitler more closely than ever attached a person to take harsh vengeance killed himself," Hitler declared.

The next day Hitler was no longer followed by his example. He took place in the tea-house with and myself participating. Witt had taken up what I had under Goebbels Reich Commissioner for War.¹¹ His escape from death was ready to implement measures calling for, for more than a year.

Hitler then turned to the victor triumphant; now at last the great come. The days of treason were to assume the command. Today Tukhachevsky, Stalin had taken conduct of the war. By liquidation room for fresh, vigorous men. He had always thought the chance trumped up, he said; but now he decided whether there might not have been no more evidence than before longer exclude the possibility of the Russian and the German general.

Everybody agreed. Goebbels tempted upon the generals. When he snapped sharply at me in an silence.*

* On July 23, 1944, Ley wrote that the regime had launched a campaign to regenerate to their very bones, blue-blooded, corrupt, and cowardly like all nations.

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self up out of the dust immediately after the explosion and saw Hitler standing there relatively uninjured, he had rushed at him, as Hitler now repeatedly related, exclaiming: "Mein Führer, you're alive, you're alive!" and ignoring all convention had wildly embraced him. It was clear that after that Hitler would never drop him—he was even more closely than ever attached to him since Keitel seemed the right person to take harsh vengeance upon the rebels. "Keitel was almost skilled himself," Hitler declared. "He will show no mercy."

The next day Hitler was more friendly to me again, and his entourage followed his example. Under his chairmanship a conference took place in the teahouse with Keitel, Himmler, Bormann, Goebbels, and myself participating. Without crediting me with the idea, Hitler had taken up what I had urged two weeks before and appointed Goebbels Reich Commissioner for Total Mobilization of Resources for War.¹¹ His escape from death had made him more resolute; he was ready to implement measures which Goebbels and I had been calling for, for more than a year.

Hitler then turned to the events of the past several days. He was triumphant; now at last the great positive turning point in the war had come. The days of treason were over; new and better generals would assume the command. Today he had realized, he said, that in trying Tukhachevsky, Stalin had taken a decisive step toward successful conduct of the war. By liquidating his General Staff, Stalin had made room for fresh, vigorous men who did not date back to Tsarist days. He had always thought the charges in the 1937 Moscow trials were trumped up, he said; but now after the experience of July 20 he wondered whether there might not have been something to them. He still had no more evidence than before, Hitler continued, but he could no longer exclude the possibility of treasonous collaboration between the Russian and the German general staffs.

Everybody agreed. Goebbels poured buckets of scorn and contempt upon the generals. When I tried to temper some of this, he snapped sharply at me in an unfriendly manner. Hitler listened in silence.*

* On July 23, 1944, Ley wrote an editorial in *Angriff* which revealed that the regime had launched a campaign against the old military aristocracy: "Degenerate to their very bones, blue-blooded to the point of idiocy, nauseatingly corrupt, and cowardly like all nasty creatures—such is the aristocratic clique

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The fact that General Fellgiebel, the chief of the Signal Corps, had also been a member of the conspiracy, prompted Hitler to an outburst in which spite and fury were mingled with a sense of being vindicated:

Now I know why all my great plans in Russia had to fail in recent years. It was all treason! But for those traitors, we would have won long ago. Here is my justification before history. Now we will find out whether Fellgiebel had a direct wire to Switzerland and passed all my plans on to the Russians. He must be interrogated by every means! . . . Once again I was right. Who wanted to believe me when I objected to any unification of the Wehrmacht leadership! Under one man, the Wehrmacht is a menace! Do you still think it was chance that I had so many divisions of the Waffen-SS raised? I knew why I had to have that, against all the opposition. . . . The Inspector General of the Armored Forces—that was all done to split up the army as much as possible.

Hitler had another outburst of murderous rage against the conspirators. He would "annihilate and exterminate" every one of them, he declared. Then the names of men who had opposed him at one time or another occurred to him. He now included them in the ranks of the conspirators. Schacht had been a saboteur of rearmament, he said. Unfortunately he, Hitler, had always been too soft. He ordered the immediate arrest of Schacht. "Hess, too, will be mercilessly hanged, just like these swine, these criminal officers. He was the one who started it, he gave the example of treason."

After each such eruption Hitler calmed down. With the gratefulness of a man who has just survived a great peril, he recapitulated the whole story of the assassination attempt and then spoke of the turning point it had inaugurated, of the victory which had now again moved within reach. Euphorically, he drew new confidence from the failure of the plot, and we all too willingly let ourselves be swayed by his optimism.

Soon afterward the main bunker, whose rebuilding had caused

which the Jew has sicked on National Socialism. . . . We must exterminate this filth, extirpate it root and branch. . . . It is not enough simply to seize the offensive . . . we must exterminate the entire breed."

Hitler to be in my barracks completed. If ever a building can this bunker was it. From the tian tomb. It was actually no concrete, without direct ventil masses of concrete far exceed seemed as if the concrete wall rounded Hitler separated him as well as literal sense, and loc

Chief of Staff Zeitzler had July 20. I took advantage of his headquarters nearby. Saur me company. During our talk Günther Smend—who was to back. Saur instantly became s derstanding with which the tv to me. I reacted with an iri Zeitzler and I were alone, I l Berchtesgaden, where he hac But the very fact that Zeit strengthened my impression tl into their confidence. I never detailed report on this meeti headquarters, I flew back to l

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Hitler to be in my barracks on the fateful day of July 20, was com-
pleted. If ever a building can be considered the symbol of a situation,
this bunker was it. From the outside it looked like an ancient Egypt-
tian tomb. It was actually nothing but a great windowless block of
concrete, without direct ventilation, in cross section a building whose
masses of concrete far exceeded the usable cubic feet of space. It
seemed as if the concrete walls sixteen and a half feet thick that sur-
rounded Hitler separated him from the outside world in a figurative
as well as literal sense, and locked him up inside his delusions.

Chief of Staff Zeitzler had already been dismissed on the night of
July 20. I took advantage of my stay to pay a farewell visit to him at
his headquarters nearby. Saur could not be dissuaded from keeping
me company. During our talk Zeitzler's adjutant, Lieutenant Colonel
Günther Smend—who was to be executed a few weeks later—reported
back. Saur instantly became suspicious: "Did you see the look of un-
derstanding with which the two of them greeted each other?" he said
to me. I reacted with an irritable, "No." Shortly afterward, when
Zeitzler and I were alone, I learned that Smend had just come from
Berchtesgaden, where he had cleaned out the General Staff's safe.
But the very fact that Zeitzler commented so innocently on this
strengthened my impression that the conspirators had not taken him
into their confidence. I never found out whether Saur gave Hitler a
detailed report on this meeting. After three days in the Fuehrer's
headquarters, I flew back to Berlin early on the morning of July 24.

SS Obergruppenführer Kaltenbrunner, the Gestapo chief, had an-
nounced his impending arrival. He had never called on me before. I
received him lying down, since my leg was once again troubling me.
I had the impression that Kaltenbrunner was scrutinizing me sharply;
he had that air of cordial menace I had noticed in him on the night
of July 20. Without preface he began: "In the safe at the Bendler-
strasse we have found papers relating to the government the July 20
men intended to set up. You are down on the list as Armaments
Minister."

He asked whether and what I had known about the position in-
tended for me, but otherwise remained formal and polite as usual.
Perhaps such an expression of consternation had flashed across my
face when he made his revelation that he was ready to believe me. He
soon stopped making any further inquiries and instead took a docu-

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ment from his pocket. It was an organizational plan for the post-conspiracy government. Apparently it had been drawn up by a military officer, for the organization of the Wehrmacht was treated with particular care. A "Great General Staff" was to coordinate the three branches of the armed forces. Subordinate to it was the Commander in Chief of the Home Army, who was also to be supreme Armaments Chief. Next to that, in the midst of the many other small boxes, neatly printed in block letters, I found the legend: "Armaments: Speer." In pencil a skeptic had written alongside: "If possible"—and added a question mark. That unknown officer, and the fact that I had not accepted the invitation to the Bendlerstrasse on July 20, saved my life. Curiously, Hitler never said a word about it to me.*

Naturally, I considered at the time what I would have done had the July 20 insurrection succeeded and the conspirators asked me to continue in my post. I probably would have complied for a transitional period, but not without considerable inner conflict. Judging by all I know today about the individuals and the motives of the conspiracy, collaboration with them would within a short time have cured me of my loyalty to Hitler. They would quickly have won me over to their cause. But that in itself would have made my remaining in the government, doubtful enough for superficial reasons, quite impossible for psychological reasons. For if I had come to a moral understanding of the nature of the regime and of the part that I had played in it, I would have been forced to recognize that it was no longer conceivable for me to hold any position of leadership in a post-Hitler Germany.

The next day our Ministry, like all the others, held a loyalty meeting in our conference hall. The whole affair lasted no longer than twenty minutes. I delivered the feeblest and most insecure speech I had ever made. As a rule I had steered clear of the usual formulas, but this time I bellowed out our faith in Hitler and his greatness and

* This organization plan conformed largely to the draft found in the Bendlerstrasse of a decree which Regent Beck was supposed to sign; it established "the provisional wartime leadership structure." In addition there was a list of ministers; the Armaments Ministry was to be placed under Goerdeler, the future Chancellor. I was included in this list, also with a question mark after my name and the notation that I should not be asked until after the coup had succeeded. (From *Der 20. Juli*, ed. Hans Royce [Berto Verlag, Bonn, 1961].)

for the first time in my life. Obviously, I had not felt that they ran contrary both to my felt insecure, compromised processes.

My fears, incidental to the fact that I had been arrested; otherwise, I had not felt that they ran contrary both to my felt insecure, compromised processes.

All my worries were due to the request to address a crowd of armaments again. I was not, and although I was not, I countered an icy air among all these assembled characters characterized the atmosphere of the Gauleiters and Reichsleiteres at last know where Speer.

As it happened, the situation had reached its peak again and worsened my general remarks and instead of the successes of the Hitler had assigned to party leaders must have been able at this of all times considerably when I dealt with stocks of spare parts was not using. Goebbels, being how determined to the conspiracy, and treacherous not help being impressive.

From Posen the place where Hitler addressed the crowd not belong to this group present. I took a seat in the front.

Hitler spoke of the future, of the bad record created by the Weimar Republic, expressed great hopes for the future.

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for the first time in my life ended a speech with "Sieg Heil!" Previously, I had not felt any need for such Byzantine turns of phrase; they ran contrary both to my temperament and my pride. But now I felt insecure, compromised, and involved in mysterious, opaque processes.

My fears, incidentally, were not unfounded. Rumors had it that I had been arrested; other rumors reported that I had already been executed—a sign that public opinion, which still existed only beneath the surface, considered my position as imperiled.¹²

All my worries were wiped out, however, when Bormann sent me a request to address a conference of Gauleiters in Posen on the subject of armaments again. The July 20 events still hung over the group, and although I was officially rehabilitated by this invitation, I encountered an icy air of prejudice. I found myself entirely alone among all these assembled party bigwigs. Nothing could have better characterized the atmosphere than a remark that Goebbels made to the Gauleiters and Reichsleiters around him before my talk: "Now we at last know where Speer stands."¹³

As it happened, however, in July 1944 our armaments production had reached its peak. In order not to provoke the party leaders again and worsen my situation, I cautiously refrained from any general remarks and instead showered them with a cloudburst of statistics on the successes of our previous work and on the new programs Hitler had assigned to us. From the overfulfilled quotas, even the party leaders must have seen that I and my apparatus were indispensable at this of all times. I noticed that the atmosphere warmed considerably when I demonstrated, with many examples, what huge stocks of spare parts and accessories the Wehrmacht still had and was not using. Goebbels cried out loudly, "Sabotage, sabotage!" proving how determined the leadership was since July 20 to see treason, conspiracy, and treachery at work everywhere. The Gauleiters could not help being impressed by my progress report.

From Posen the participants in this meeting went to headquarters, where Hitler addressed them the next day. Although by rank I did not belong to this group,¹⁴ Hitler had explicitly invited me to be present. I took a seat in the back row.

Hitler spoke of the consequences of July 20. Once again he attributed the bad record of the past years to treason by army officers and expressed great hopes for the future. Never before in his life had he

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felt such confidence, said Hitler.¹⁵ For all his previous efforts had been sabotaged, but now the criminal clique had been exposed and purged. In the end this putsch may well have been the most fortunate of events for our future. Thus Hitler repeated almost word for word what he had already said to his intimates immediately after the putsch. I too was falling under the spell of his self-confidence, for all its lapses of logic, when he dropped a sentence that suddenly startled me out of my trance: "If the German nation is now defeated in this struggle, it has been too weak. That will mean it has not withstood the test of history and was destined for nothing but doom."¹⁶

Surprisingly and quite contrary to his usual way of not especially heaping praise on his assistants, Hitler pointed to my work and my achievements. Probably he knew or sensed that this was necessary. Because of the unfriendly attitude of the Gauleiters, I had to be given a special boost to make it possible for me to go on working successfully. He made it emphatically clear to the party audience that his relations to me had not cooled since July 20.

I utilized my newly strengthened position to help acquaintances and associates who had been caught in the wave of persecution following the events of July 20.* Saur, on the other hand, denounced two officers of the Army Ordinance Office, General Schneider and Colonel Fichtner, whose arrests Hitler ordered at once. In Schneider's case, Saur had merely quoted a remark of his to the effect that Hitler was incapable of judging technical questions. Fichtner's arrest was based solely on his not having supported vigorously the new types of tanks that Hitler wanted at the beginning of the war. This was now interpreted as deliberate sabotage. Still, Hitler was sufficiently tractable at this point so that when I interceded for the two officers he agreed to their release, though on the condition that they no longer be employed in the Army Ordinance Office.¹⁷

On August 18 at headquarters I observed the curious state of mind Hitler was now in concerning the reliability of the officer corps. Field Marshal Kluge, the Commander in Chief in the West, had set out on

a trip to visit the Seventh Army. Kluge, accompanied only by his wife, had approached more and more detailed negotiations with the Western Allies. And when no deal was struck, this was only because an earlier trip and frustrated his trip. Kluge had ordered to headquarters. Marshal had succumbed to his famous sixth sense, and was killed thoroughly. He was tried and executed. His death had been caused by that Kluge had been envious. Field Marshal had left a

During this stay at headquarters, Brunner's interrogations were conducted in a bunker. One of the adjutants was ordered to read for two nights the things I had said before for justified criticism, seeing that the arrested men had in fact done what was to adopt me into the entourage: "nodding don't"

During these days a film was shown. Lost in thought, I picked up a picture of a hanged man in his trousers. One of the explanations: "That's Hitler, isn't it? Too? These are all photos of"

That evening the film was shown in the movie room. I did not go to attract attention to my work. I saw many civilian men and civil attended.

* As Gregor Janssen explains in *Das Ministerium Speer*, I used my influence to have several persons released, among them General Speidel, the publisher Suhrkamp, the wife of General Seydlitz and his brother-in-law, Dr. Eberhardt Barth. I also helped Count Schwerin, General Zeitler, General Heinrici, and the industrialists Vögler, Bücher, Meyer, Stinnes, Haniel, Reuter, Meinen, and Reusch, who were implicated through Goerdeler.

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a trip to visit the Seventh Army three days before, and could not be reached for many hours. When the report came that the Field Marshal, accompanied only by his adjutant who had a radio transmitter with him, had approached close to the front, Hitler began to make more and more detailed surmises. Soon he had decided that Kluge must have gone to a predetermined place in order to conduct negotiations with the Western Allies on a capitulation of the German army in the West. And when no such negotiations occurred, he reasoned that this was only because an air raid had interrupted the Field Marshal's trip and frustrated his treasonous intentions. By the time I arrived at headquarters Kluge had already been relieved of his command and ordered to headquarters. The next report to arrive was that the Field Marshal had succumbed to a heart attack on the way. Hitler, invoking his famous sixth sense, ordered the Gestapo to examine the corpse thoroughly. He was triumphant when it turned out that Kluge's death had been caused by poison. Now he was completely convinced that Kluge had been engaged in treasonous activities, although the Field Marshal had left a letter assuring him of his loyalty unto death.

During this stay at headquarters I came across the reports of Kaltenbrunner's interrogations lying on the big map table in Hitler's bunker. One of the adjutants who was friendly to me let me have them to read for two nights straight, for I still felt far from safe. Many things I had said before July 20, which could all along have passed for justified criticism, seemed in retrospect incriminating. But none of the arrested men had in fact incriminated me. The one thing the rebels had done was to adopt my favorite phrase for the yes-men in Hitler's entourage: "nodding donkeys."

During these days a heap of photographs also lay on this table. Lost in thought, I picked one up, but quickly put it down. It was a picture of a hanged man in convict dress, a broad, colored stripe on his trousers. One of the SS leaders standing near me remarked, in explanation: "That's Witzleben. Don't you want to see the others too? These are all photos of the executions."

That evening the film of the execution of the conspirators was shown in the movie room. I could not and would not see it. But in order not to attract attention, I gave the excuse that I was far behind in my work. I saw many others going to this showing, mostly lower-ranking SS men and civilians. Not a single officer of the Wehrmacht attended.

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and energetically issued its orders to the government and all the rest of us.

Only a week after the Gauleiter meeting in Posen, Arthur Tix, the head of my Ordnance Directive Committee, informed me that "Gauleiters, SA leaders, and other party authorities were suddenly, without previous consultation," trying to interfere with the work of the factories. Three weeks later, as a result of inroads by the party, "a double line of command" had arisen. The armaments bureaus were "having to yield to pressure from the Gauleiters; their arbitrary interference is creating a confusion that stinks to heaven."¹

All this ambition and enterprise on the part of the Gauleiters was encouraged by Goebbels, who was suddenly feeling himself not so much a government minister as a party leader. Supported by Bormann and Keitel, he was preparing large-scale call-ups to the services. Such ill-considered intervention would only mean major disruption in the factories. On August 30, 1944, I informed the heads of my departments of my intention to make the Gauleiters responsible for armaments production.² I was going to capitulate.

I was driven to this because I no longer had any support behind me. As had long been the case for the majority of the ministers, I could not go to Hitler with any such concerns, especially if they involved the party. As soon as a conversation took a troublesome turn, Hitler became evasive. It had become more sensible to communicate my complaints to him in writing.

On September 20, I wrote Hitler a lengthy letter in which I candidly described the party's ill-feeling toward me, its efforts to eliminate me or at any rate by-pass me, its accusations and bullying tactics.

The events of July 20, I wrote, had "magnified the existing distrust of the reliability of the many men from industry who constituted my group of associates." The party clung to the notion that my closest aides were "reactionary, tied down to one-sided economic views, and alien to the party." Goebbels and Bormann had frankly expressed their view that my Ministry and my organization for industrial self-responsibility were "a collection of reactionary captains of industry," if not outright "antiparty." I would not, I said, "feel strong enough to carry out the technical work assigned to me and my associates unhampered and with any promise of success if it were going to be evaluated by the standards of party policy."³

Only on two conditions, the letter continued, would I allow the

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party a voice in armaments matters: If both the Gauleiters and Bormann's economic representatives in the districts (Gau economic advisers) were directly subordinated to me on questions of armaments. There must be, I insisted, "clarity in the chain of command and on matters of jurisdiction."⁴ In addition I demanded that Hitler once again approve my principles: "A plain decision is needed whether industry is to be guided by industrial self-responsibility built on confidence in the factory managers or by a different system. In my opinion responsibility of the factory managers for their plants must be preserved and emphasized as strongly as possible." I concluded this letter by urging that a system which had proved itself in practice ought not to be changed—but that one way or another we had to have a decision "which will plainly indicate what direction the guidance of the economy is to take in the future."

On September 21, I handed Hitler my letter at headquarters. He received it without a word and looked through it. Then, still without replying, he pressed the signal button and handed the document to his adjutant, telling him to pass it on to Bormann. Goebbels was present at headquarters also, and Hitler explained that Goebbels and Bormann would decide together what to do. I had lost for good. Hitler had evidently grown weary of intervening in these disputes, which made little sense to him.

A few hours later Bormann asked me to his office, which was a few steps from Hitler's bunker. He was in shirtsleeves and wore suspenders over his fat trunk; Goebbels was carefully dressed. Citing Hitler's decree of July 25, Goebbels flatly declared that he would now make full use of his new powers to command me. Bormann agreed: I was under Goebbels now. For the rest, he would not stand for any further attempts on my part to influence Hitler directly. Bormann told me off in his usual loutish fashion, while Goebbels listened menacingly, making cynical interjections. The unification I had so often demanded had come into being at last, although in the surprising form of an alliance between Goebbels and Bormann.

Hitler continued to say nothing about my written demands, but two days later he gave me another sign of his sympathy by signing a proclamation of mine to the factory directors. This could be construed as support of the principle I had set forth in my letter. Under normal circumstances it would have constituted a victory over Bor-

mann and Goebbels. But Hitler was not the man to let things be what it had been. His close counter to Hitler's pronouncement with the economy. These were now the party apparatus and been affected. The conflict, following weeks and grew incalculable.⁵ Naturally, Hitler himself stood for the sovereignty. He stood for more soldiers and mine for the backed one of us, then the party commands—until the battle was made both, one and then the other, in the quarrel and the que-

Harried both by politics and to get away from Berlin. I soon visits to the front. As far as my experiences I gathered could not be by the observations I made at the commanders to be able occasionally.

Later on, when I took account of all my reports, whether or not. For example, many of the generals with whom I talked, asked to be fitted out with arms and tanks with Hitler, however, and Himmler, the Army, now thought that troops possessed the morale to resist the new units, the so-called people's divisions might just as well be completely.

I was able to observe the results in September 1944 when I visited a division near Bitburg. Its commander, a former warfare, showed me the battle formations, inexperienced tank brigades trained, it had lost ten of its thir-

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both the Gauleiters and Bormann districts (Gau economic administration) on questions of armaments. The chain of command and on I demanded that Hitler once a decision is needed whether self-responsibility built on a different system. In my opinions for their plants must be as possible." I concluded this had proved itself in practice anyway or another we had to have what direction the guidance of

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mann and Goebbels. But Hitler's authority in the party was no longer what it had been. His closest paladins simply ignored it or went counter to Hitler's pronouncements whenever they wished to tamper with the economy. These were the first clear signs of disintegration; now the party apparatus and the loyalty of Hitler's leading men had been affected. The conflict, which continued to smolder during the following weeks and grew increasingly violent, intensified these symptoms.⁵ Naturally, Hitler himself was partly to blame for this loss of sovereignty. He stood helplessly between Goebbels's demands for more soldiers and mine for increased armaments production. First he backed one of us, then the other, nodding assent to contradictory commands—until the bombs and the advancing enemy armies made both, one and then the other, wholly superfluous, finally wiping out the quarrel and the question of Hitler's authority.

Harried both by politics and the external enemy, I was always glad to get away from Berlin. I soon began undertaking longer and longer visits to the front. As far as armaments went, it was little help, for the experiences I gathered could no longer be put to use. But still I hoped by the observations I made and the information I received from the commanders to be able occasionally to influence decisions at headquarters.

Later on, when I took account of the results, I had to recognize that all my reports, whether oral or written, had had no useful effect. For example, many of the generals in command of forward sectors, with whom I talked, asked to have their old forces replenished and fitted out with arms and tanks which our factories were still supplying. Hitler, however, and Himmler, his new commander of the Reserve Army, now thought that troops thrown back by the enemy no longer possessed the morale to resist and that it was better to hastily set up new units, the so-called people's grenadier divisions. As they put it, the beaten divisions might just as well be allowed to "bleed to death" completely.

I was able to observe the results of this theory at the end of September 1944 when I visited a unit of an experienced tank division near Bitburg. Its commander, a man tried and tested by many years in warfare, showed me the battlefield where a few days before a newly formed, inexperienced tank brigade had met tragedy. Insufficiently trained, it had lost ten of its thirty-two new Panthers from bad driving

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while deploying. The remaining twenty-two tanks that had reached the deployment area had, as the commander demonstrated, been ranged so stupidly on an open field, without adequate reconnaissance, that an American antitank unit had shot up fifteen of them as if it were engaged in target practice. "To think of what my experienced troops could have done with these tanks!" the captain said bitterly. I described this incident to Hitler, concluding with the caustic comment that this example showed that "new levies often have considerable disadvantages as against providing replacements."⁶ But Hitler remained unimpressed. In a situation conference he commented that from his experiences as an infantryman he knew that the troops took care of their weapons only when supplies were kept extremely meager.

Other visits showed me that efforts were being made on the Western front to arrive at understandings with the enemy on special problems. At Arnhem, I found General Bittrich of the Waffen-SS in a state of fury. The day before his Second Tank Corps had virtually wiped out a British airborne division. During the fighting the general had made an arrangement permitting the enemy to run a field hospital situated behind the German lines. But party functionaries had taken it upon themselves to kill British and American pilots, and Bittrich was cast in the role of a liar. His violent denunciation of the party was all the more striking since it came from an SS general.

But even Hitler's former army adjutant, Colonel Engel, who was now commanding the Twelfth Infantry Division near Düren, had on his own initiative made an agreement with the enemy for rescue of the wounded during pauses in battles. It was inadvisable to mention such pacts at headquarters, for experience had taught me that Hitler would consider them signs of "slackness." Actually, we had often heard him disparaging the so-called chivalric tradition of the Prussian officer class. In contrast to that, he would say, the toughness and inflexibility of the struggle waged in the East on both sides had the effect of strengthening the fighting spirit of the enlisted man, since humane considerations could not even arise under such conditions.

I recall just one single case in which Hitler tacitly, though reluctantly, consented to a deal with the enemy. Late in the autumn of 1944 the British fleet cut the German troops on the Greek islands off from all connection with the mainland. In spite of the total British control of the sea, the German units were permitted to embark and sail undisturbed to the mainland; in some cases the German vessels

passed within visual range of B the German side had agreed to against the Russians until the forces. When this operation was —Hitler commented: "This is the thing like that."

In September 1944 the generals the Gauleiters of the western British armies to exploit their so almost unarmed and worn-out never pause.⁷ No one any longer them; no one who had preserved thing like a "Marne miracle" in or

Preparations for the demolitions kinds, at home and in the occupation of my Ministry. During this had already given orders to the enemy made by following a scenario invasion armies began advancing he issued a similar order. At considerations underlay this policy make it difficult for the enemy to supplies from the liberated countries services as well as electricity and an armaments industry. As long as tant eventuality, such actions seemed meaning the moment ultimate defeat

In view of the hopeless situation we wanted to end this war with the kind that would hamper future recovery by that special mood of total despair spread visibly among Hitler's followers more ruthlessly determined to be able to outwit him with his own trick. Since in hopeless situations the territories would soon be reconquered premise of his and point out that I

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passed within visual range of British naval units. As a quid pro quo the German side had agreed to use these troops to hold Salonika against the Russians until the city could be taken over by British forces. When this operation was over—it had been proposed by Jodl—Hitler commented: "This is the only time we have consented to anything like that."

In September 1944 the generals at the front, the industrialists, and the Gauleiters of the western regions expected the American and British armies to exploit their superior power and roll right over our almost unarmed and worn-out troops in an offensive that would never pause.⁷ No one any longer counted on being able to stop them; no one who had preserved any sense of reality believed in anything like a "Marne miracle" in our favor.

Preparations for the demolition of industrial installations of all kinds, at home and in the occupied territories, lay within the jurisdiction of my Ministry. During the retreats in the Soviet Union, Hitler had already given orders to negate whatever territorial gains the enemy made by following a scorched earth policy. As soon as the invasion armies began advancing from their bridgehead in Normandy, he issued a similar order. At the beginning, rational operational considerations underlay this policy of destruction. The idea was to make it difficult for the enemy to establish a foothold, to draw his supplies from the liberated country, to make use of technical repair services as well as electricity and gas, or in the longer run to build up an armaments industry. As long as the end of the war remained a distant eventuality, such actions seemed to me justified. But they lost all meaning the moment ultimate defeat drew inescapably close.

In view of the hopeless situation, I very naturally assumed that we wanted to end this war with the least possible devastation of the kind that would hamper future reconstruction. For I was not imbued by that special mood of total doom which was now beginning to spread visibly among Hitler's followers. Hitler himself was more and more ruthlessly determined to bring on total catastrophe. But I was able to outwit him with his own arguments, and this by a simple trick. Since in hopeless situations he also always insisted that the lost territories would soon be reconquered, I needed only to repeat this premise of his and point out that I would need the industries of these

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areas to maintain arms production as soon as we had reconquered them.

Just after the beginning of the invasion—on June 20, when the Americans had broken through the German defensive front and encircled Cherbourg—I used this argument to good effect. This is the basis for Hitler's pronouncement that "in spite of the present difficulties of transportation at the front, abandonment of the industrial capacities there is out of the question."⁸ This new directive allowed the military commander to evade a previous order of Hitler's which called for a million Frenchmen working in the restricted factories to be transported to Germany in case of a successful invasion.⁹

Now Hitler was once again talking about the necessity for sweeping destruction of French industry. In spite of this I succeeded on August 19, when the Allied troops were still northwest of Paris, in making him consent to our merely paralyzing rather than destroying the industrial and power installations about to fall into enemy hands.* But I could not obtain any fundamental decision from Hitler; I had to work from case to case, on the pretense that all retreats were only temporary. As time passed, that argument gradually came to seem more and more ridiculous.

When the enemy troops were approaching the ore basin near Longwy and Briey toward the end of August, I faced a changed situation. Since this region of Lorraine had been practically incorporated into Reich territory in 1940, I found myself running up against the jurisdiction of a Gauleiter. Since persuading the Gauleiter to surrender the area to the enemy without destruction was hopeless, I appealed directly to Hitler and was authorized to preserve iron mines and industry, and to inform the Gauleiters involved of this decision.**

* See *Führerprotokoll*, August 18–20, 1944, Point 8. The verdict delivered September 30, 1946, by the International Military Tribunal stated concerning this and future activities of mine: "In the closing stages of the war he [Speer] was one of the few men who had the courage to tell Hitler that the war was lost and to take steps to prevent the senseless destruction of production facilities both in Germany and the occupied territories. He carried out his opposition to Hitler's scorched earth policy by intentionally sabotaging it in certain Western countries and in Germany, at considerable personal danger to himself."

** The Gauleiter of Cologne (Grohé) had been placed in charge of Belgium by Hitler; the Gauleiter of Mosel (Simon) was assigned Luxembourg and the Minette region; and the Gauleiter of the Saar Palatinate (Bürkel) was assigned

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At Saarbrücken in mid-September, Hermann Röchling informed me that we had handed over the French mines in running condition. But by chance the power plant which kept the mine pumps going was still on our side of the front. Röchling sounded me out on whether he could continue to deliver current to the pumping stations over the still undamaged high-tension line. I agreed to that, as I did to the proposal of a troop commander to continue supplying current to the hospitals of Liège after the city had fallen to the Allies, and the front ran between the city and its power plants.

From about the middle of September on, I was also faced with the question of what was to be done with German industry. Naturally, the industrialists were not at all willing to have their factories destroyed. Surprisingly enough, some of the Gauleiters in the endangered areas shared their views. This was a curious phase, both of the war and our lives. In roundabout conversations, full of traps and detours, one man would probe another's views; groups of accomplices formed; and a candid remark on this subject might mean putting your life on the line.

By way of precaution, in case Hitler should hear of the nondestruction of plants in German frontline areas, I informed him—in a report on a trip I had made between September 10–14—that production continued on a relatively satisfactory basis even right behind the front. I made the point that if a factory in Aachen, so close to the

the area between the Meurthe and the Moselle. Assured of Hitler's consent, I could thus write to Gauleiter Simon on September 5, 1944:

Plans must be made so that if the Minette, the Luxembourg area, and other industrial regions fall into enemy hands, the factories will only be crippled temporarily; this is to be achieved by removing various elements and taking them along on the retreat, particularly the electrical ones, without damaging the factories themselves. We must count on recovering the Minette region, since in the long run we would not be able to continue the war without it. Our experiences in Russia have shown that industrial plants can change owners several times without either side's inflicting damage; each side simply runs the factory according to its own needs. The coal and iron associations will receive the appropriate instructions.

These associations received the same orders with the additional request that "the same measures be applied to the endangered coal-producing areas in Belgium, Holland, and the Saar. The pumps for the mines must be kept in perfect working order."

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front, could turn out four million rounds of infantry ammunition per month, the sensible thing was to keep making this ammunition for the immediate use of the troops right up to the last moment, even under artillery bombardment. It would not be sensible, I argued, to shut down coking works in Aachen if these could continue to assure the supply of gas to Cologne, as in the past, and if at the same time a few tons of fuel for the troops were produced every day. Furthermore, it would be a mistake to shut down the power plants in the immediate vicinity of the front since the telephone communications of the troops and civilian populace were dependent on the supply of electricity.

Simultaneously, I sent the Gauleiters a teletype message referring to earlier decisions by Hitler and warning that industrial installations must not be damaged.¹⁰

Suddenly all these efforts seemed nullified. For when I was back in Berlin the chief of our Central Office, Liebel, met me in our guest-house for engineers at Wannsee and informed me that during my absence important orders from Hitler had gone out to all the ministries. According to these latest orders, the principle of scorched earth must be ruthlessly carried out on German territory.

Partly to be safe from eavesdroppers, we sprawled on the guest-house lawn. It was a sunny, late summer day; sailboats moved slowly along the lake, as Liebel drew the picture of what the Fuehrer's latest edict meant. No German was to inhabit territory occupied by the enemy. Those wretches who did remain would find themselves in a desert devoid of all the amenities of civilization. Not only the industrial plants, and not only the gas, water, electrical works and telephone exchanges were to be completely smashed. Everything, simply everything essential to the maintenance of life would be destroyed: the ration card records, the files of marriage and resident registries, the records of bank accounts. In addition, food supplies were to be destroyed, farms burned down and cattle killed. Not even those works of art that the bombs had spared were to be preserved. Monuments, palaces, castles and churches, theaters and opera houses were also to be leveled. A few days earlier, at Hitler's command, an editorial had appeared in the *Völkischer Beobachter* (September 7, 1944) putting this surge of vandalism into rhetoric: "Not a German stalk of wheat is to feed the enemy, not a German mouth to give him information, not a German hand to offer him help. He is to find every

footbridge destroyed, lation, and hatred will

In my travel report war victims: "In the cessations of evacuees, exactly as in France in such as these will sur in issuing evacuation West to see for your expects this of you."¹²

But Hitler did not. Kreisleiter Schmeer of to evacuate the city, he from the party, and o

It would have been this order. And my a Nevertheless my anxie teletype message with Bormann transmit it t was a stratagem for ge nothing at all about t reviewed the previous asked for some over-al attuned to Hitler's real he canceled his order was lost. By such an a ment for total resistance

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footbridge destroyed, every road blocked—nothing but death, annihilation, and hatred will meet him."¹¹

In my travel report I had tried to arouse Hitler's sympathy for the war victims: "In the vicinity of Aachen one sees the miserable processions of evacuees, setting out with small children and the old, exactly as in France in 1940. As more evacuations take place, scenes such as these will surely multiply, which should make for restraint in issuing evacuation orders." I called upon Hitler to "go to the West to see for yourself the conditions there. . . . The populace expects this of you."¹²

But Hitler did not go. On the contrary. As soon as he heard that Kreisleiter Schmeer of Aachen had not applied all means of coercion to evacuate the city, he stripped him of his various posts, expelled him from the party, and ordered him to the front as an ordinary soldier.

It would have been pointless to try to persuade Hitler to rescind this order. And my authority did not suffice for independent action. Nevertheless my anxiety was so great that I impulsively dictated a teletype message with the request that after Hitler had approved it, Bormann transmit it to the eight Gauleiters of the western areas. It was a stratagem for getting Hitler to reverse himself. I therefore said nothing at all about the radical orders of recent days, but instead reviewed the previous decisions on various individual problems and asked for some over-all ruling. My text was once again psychologically attuned to Hitler's real or pretended faith in ultimate victory: Unless he canceled his order for destruction, he was admitting that the war was lost. By such an admission he undercut the whole basis of argument for total resistance. Incisively, I began:

The Fuehrer has declared that he can shortly reconquer the territories now lost. Since the western areas are vital for the armaments and war production needed to continue fighting, all measures undertaken in connection with evacuation must have in view the possibility of restoring full functioning to the industry of these areas. . . . Not until the last moment are the industrial installations to be rendered useless for a considerable time by "disabling actions" in the factories. . . . The power plants in the mining districts must be preserved, so that the water levels in the mine shafts may be controlled. If pumps fail and the pits fill, it takes months before the shafts can be restored to functioning condition.

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an hour every week. Only a fraction of the necessary fuel was being supplied to the unit.

Meanwhile the army, too, had become virtually immobile because of the fuel shortage. At the end of October, I reported to Hitler after a night journey to the Tenth Army south of the Po. There I encountered "a column of a hundred and fifty trucks, each of which had four oxen hitched to it. Many trucks were being pulled by tanks and tractors." Early in December, I expressed concern that "the training of tank drivers leaves much to be desired" because they "have no fuel for practicing."¹⁶ General Jodl, of course, knew even better than I how great the emergency was. In order to free seventeen and a half thousand tons of fuel—formerly the production of two and a half days—for the Ardennes offensive, he had to begin withholding fuel from other army groups on November 10, 1944.¹⁷

In the meantime the attacks on the hydrogenation plants had indirectly affected the entire chemical industry. I was forced to inform Hitler that "the supply of salt has to be stretched in order to fill the existing shells with explosives. This process has already reached the limit of acceptability." Actually, from October 1944 on our explosives consisted of 20 percent rock salt, which reduced their effectiveness correspondingly.¹⁸

In this desperate situation Hitler now made matters worse by gambling away his last technological trump. Grotesquely enough, in these very months we were producing more and more fighter planes. Altogether, during this late phase of the war twelve thousand seven hundred and twenty fighters were delivered to the troops which had started the war in 1939 with only seven hundred and seventy-one fighter planes.¹⁹ At the end of July, Hitler had for the second time agreed to assemble two thousand pilots for a special training course. We were still hoping that by intensive use of fighters we could inflict such heavy losses on the American air forces that we would force them to stop the bombing. For during their flights to their target and back to their bases, these bombers squadrons exposed a flank that was on the average six hundred miles long.

Fighter Commander General Adolf Galland and I had calculated that on the average one German fighter plane would be lost over Germany in order to shoot down a bomber, but that the expenditure of matériel on both sides would be in the proportion of one to six and

the attrition of pilots (pilots could parachute be taken prisoner on side, even given the en potential.*

Around August 10, with him to headquar Hitler had issued new with two thousand fig denly to be shifted to since shown us, it woul

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the attrition of pilots one to two. Moreover, since half of our downed
 pilots could parachute safely to ground, while the enemy crew would
 be taken prisoner on German soil, the advantage was surely on our
 side, even given the enemy superiority in men, materials, and training
 potential.*

Around August 10, Galland, in extreme agitation, asked me to fly
 with him to headquarters at once. In one of his arbitrary decisions
 Hitler had issued new orders: The Reich air fleet, whose outfitting
 with two thousand fighter planes was nearing completion, was sud-
 denly to be shifted to the western front. There, experience had long
 since shown us, it would be wiped out within a short time.

Hitler, of course, guessed why we were visiting him. He knew he
 had broken the promise he gave me in July to have the hydrogenation
 plants protected by fighter planes. But he forestalled a quarrel at the
 situation conference and agreed to receive us alone afterward.

I began by cautiously expressing doubts of the usefulness of his
 order and mastered my strong feelings by explaining as calmly as
 possible the catastrophic situation in armaments production. I cited
 figures and sketched the consequences that would follow from con-
 tinued bombings. That alone made Hitler nervous and angry. Al-
 though he listened in silence, I could see by his expression, by the
 lively fluttering of his hands, the way he chewed his fingernails,
 that he was growing increasingly tense. When I finished, thinking I
 had amply proved that every available plane in the Reich should be
 employed to combat the bombers, Hitler was no longer in control of
 himself. His face had flushed deep red; his eyes had turned lifeless
 and fixed. Then he roared out at the top of his lungs: "Operative
 measures are my concern! Kindly concern yourself with your arma-
 ments! This is none of your business." Possibly he might have been
 more receptive had I talked to him privately. The presence of Galland
 made him incapable of understanding or flexibility.

Abruptly, he terminated the conference, cutting off all further

* Central Planning announced on May 25, 1944: "The number of planes
 which will be completed in May is so large that the General Staff believes it
 will be eventually possible to inflict such losses on the enemy that he will no
 longer be able to afford flights over the Reich. If five fighters can be assigned to
 each enemy aircraft, the bomber is certain to be shot down. At the moment each
 bomber shot down costs us one of our fighter planes."

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argument. "I have no more time for you." Deeply perplexed, I returned to my barracks office with Galland.

The next day we were on the point of flying back to Berlin, our mission a failure, when Schaub informed us that we were to report to Hitler again. This time Hitler's rage was even more violent; he spoke faster and faster, stumbling over his own words:

I want no more planes produced at all. The fighter arm is to be dissolved. Stop aircraft production! Stop it at once, understand? You're always complaining about the shortage of skilled workers, aren't you? Put them into flak production at once. Let all the workers produce anti-aircraft guns. Use all the material for that too! Now that's an order. Send Saur to headquarters immediately. A program for flak production must be set up. Tell Saur that too. A program five times what we have now. . . . We'll shift hundreds of thousands of workers into flak production. Every day I read in the foreign press reports how dangerous flak is. They still have some respect for that, but not for our fighters.

Galland started to reply that the fighters would shoot down far more planes if they could be committed inside Germany, but he did not get beyond the first words. Again we were abruptly dismissed, actually thrown out.

In the teahouse I poured myself a glass of vermouth from the bottle that stood there for just such purposes; my stomach nerves had been affected by the scene. Galland, ordinarily so calm and controlled, looked distraught for the first time since I had known him. He could not grasp the fact that his fighter plane command was going to be dissolved, and what was more, on grounds of cowardice in the face of the enemy. For my part, I was acquainted with such tantrums on Hitler's part and knew that his decisions would usually be rescinded or revised by cautious change of course. I reassured Galland. The industrial facilities being used to build fighter planes could not be applied to the production of gun barrels, I told him. Our problem was not any shortage of flak guns, I pointed out, but the ammunition for them, and above all our lack of explosives.

Saur too, who also felt that Hitler was making unfulfillable demands, pointed out discreetly to Hitler the next day that increased production of anti-aircraft guns depended mainly on the supply of special machine tools for drilling long tubes.

Soon afterward I went to headquarters again, this time accompanied

by Saur, to discuss the details. Hitler lowered his forehead. He gave us a deadline also demanded that the agenda, with a minimum of more referred to our need defense of the home front, his command to increase flak plane, and declared the meeting.

That was the first command obeyed. I was acting on my following day, I stated to case maintain the production days later I called a meeting and explained to them, their assignment: "By sending we can meet the greatest moments manufacture on 1 Hitler had calmed down an subject, approved my proposal assigned to the category of

At the very time we were fields, and actually to abandon and more pointedly alluding to the war, thus arousing the leaders. On my visits to the mysterious smile, when the I did not like such illusions, to be dashed. In the middle following lines to Hitler:

Belief in the imminent widespread among the troops

* Quotations from the *Office* Hitler's order that fighter plane production at almost the same level: 2305

also seriously shared by higher it is right, in such difficult fulfilled in so short a time and appointment which could have the population, too, is daily weapons, wondering whether we upon us and that holding back longer be justified, the question a useful purpose.*

I was right. Nevertheless, as a prospect of the secret weapon I wrote to Goebbels that "it in the public which cannot time. . . . I would therefore the daily press and technical successes in our armaments

4. A few days before, on August do not intend to succumb to the to the new weapons. Nor am I ace they are being given in our isplay of new weapons in Rechlin, at we do not have a miraculous one. We for our part, speaking as ear to anyone who cared to listen nan expects are not really possible. ime and again observed that the concerned because their men are miracle weapons. I consider such

was asked by a group of generals on the introduction of new weaponaganda about them for the past an only say that I am firmly op-e author of this propaganda. . . . cannot expect miraculous secret r several times that I consider this aded, not only because it is mis-German soldier's fighting powers. at will end the war in one blow.

Aug 1944

Goebbels actually put an end to these reports on new weapons. But strangely enough, the rumors increased. It was only at the Nuremberg Trial that I learned from Hans Fritzsche, one of the Propaganda Minister's foremost associates, that Goebbels had set up a special department for spreading such rumors. Then, too, I realized why these rumors were often so uncannily close to what indeed we projected for the future. How often at our armaments conferences we had sat together in the evening telling each other about the newest technological developments. Even the possibilities of an atom bomb were discussed on such occasions. One of Goebbels's chief assistants had often participated in these meetings as a reporter and thus been present at the evening gatherings.

In those turbulent times in which everyone was eager to find reason for hope, rumors found fertile soil. On the other hand, the populace had long since stopped believing the newspapers. There was one exception: During the closing months of the war a growing band of desperate people began pinning their hopes on the astrological sheets. Since these were dependent on the Propaganda Ministry, for a variety of reasons they were, as I learned from Fritzsche at Nuremberg, used as a tool for influencing public opinion. Fake horoscopes spoke of valleys of darkness which had to be passed through, foretold imminent surprises, intimated happy outcomes. Only in the astrological sheets did the regime still have a future.

April 1944

28

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The Plunge

THE ARMAMENTS INDUSTRY, WHICH FROM THE SPRING OF 1944 HAD been unified in my Ministry, began to disintegrate by the late autumn. For one thing, the big rocket project had, as I have already related, been transferred to the SS. Then again, several Gauleiters had contrived to take over responsibility for armaments within their own districts. Hitler supported such enterprises. For example, he gave his consent when Sauckel as Gauleiter of Thuringia volunteered to set up a large underground factory for mass production of a single-motored jet fighter which Hitler dubbed the "people's fighter." But by then we were already entering our economic death throes, so that this splintering no longer had serious effects.

Along with such last-ditch efforts hopes arose, which could be construed as signs of increasing confusion, that we would win through even with primitive weapons and thus compensate for our technological predicament. The courage of the individual soldier was to take the place of technological efficiency in arms. In April 1944, Doenitz had put the ingenious Vice Admiral Heye in charge of building one-

man submarines and other the piecework production the invasion had succeeded. Himmler, for his part, ing manned rocket planes by ramming them. Another (tank destroyer), a small substitute for the antitank

In the late autumn of 1944, the use of gas masks and apparatus was made responsible to him. With the entire population from the production rose to more than one million per month, it was evident that the urban population could be kept from published advice or the use of paper masks.

At the time, it is true, the attack on German cities, with the protective measures preparations were intended would begin. Among other things, it was called tabu; it penetrated the contact with even very small

Robert Ley, by profession a railroad car to a meeting

* Modeled on the American production of 1,253,000 in December 1944.

** In fact on August 5, 1944, the capability for waging poison gas warfare, the available 32,000 tons of poison gas, 965 square miles of territory in Cologne, Essen, Frankfurt, and other cities. *Heimwaffen des Dritten Reiches*, October 11, 1944, to Keitel. The chemical industry was bombed and the use of mustard gas and 1000 tons of cumulated large quantities of the British supplies, even the use of gas was considerably extended during the

April 1944

As usual, our conversation took place over glasses of strong wines. His increased stammering betrayed his agitation: "You know we have this new poison gas—I've heard about it. The Fuehrer must do it. He must use it. Now he has to do it! When else! This is the last moment. You too must make him realize that it's time." I remained silent. But apparently Ley had had a similar conversation with Goebbels, for the Propaganda Minister asked some of my associates in the chemical industry about the substance and its effect, and then urged Hitler to employ this novel gas. Hitler, to be sure, had always rejected gas warfare; but now he hinted at a situation conference in headquarters that the use of gas might stop the advance of the Soviet troops. He went on with vague speculations that the West would accept gas warfare against the East because at this stage of the war the British and American governments had an interest in stopping the Russian advance. When no one at the situation conference spoke up in agreement, Hitler did not return to the subject.

Undoubtedly the generals feared the unpredictable consequences. I myself wrote to Keitel on October 11, 1944, that because of the blows to the chemical industry we were quite out of such basic materials as cyanide and methanol.* On November 1, therefore, the production of tabun had to be stopped and that of mustard gas limited to a quarter of capacity. Keitel, to be sure, obtained an order from Hitler not to reduce poison-gas production under any circumstances. But such orders no longer bore any relation to realities. I did not respond and merely allotted the basic chemical materials as I pleased.

On November 11 a new note of alarm entered my frequent memoranda on shutdowns in the fuel industry. For more than six weeks, traffic to and from the Ruhr area had been blocked. "It is self-evident, given the whole nature of the Reich's economic structure," I wrote to Hitler, "that cessation of production in the Rhine-Westphalian industrial area is intolerable for the entire German economy and for a successful conduct of the war. . . . The most important armaments plants are reported on the verge of going under. Under existing conditions there is no way to avoid these shutdowns."

* In October 1944 the necessary materials for poison-gas production were still being manufactured: methanol (21,500 tons per month in 1943) at the rate of 10,900 tons in October 1944; cyanide (1234 tons in 1943) at the rate of 336 tons in October 1944.

Denied fresh supplies of Ruhr rapidly exhausting their stock and margarine plants were or supply of coke to the hospitals

Things were literally moving anarchy loomed before us. Ctinuations but were stopped e them for their own needs. T gas and electricity were available arose from the Chancellery: I have its full consignment for th

Faced with this situation v grams, but only try to produce used up, armaments production I underestimated—as no —the large stocks of materials tories.² An extensive search maments could in fact be com Hitler accepted a last "emergency" called it, with a calm that seemed word on the obvious implication what these were.

Around this time Hitler, at the presence of all the general genius in our armaments industry being overcome by him."

General Thomale put in a Speer is here."

"Yes, I know," Hitler replied. "But Saur is the genius who will"

Oddly enough, I swallowed turbation, almost indifferently Hitler.

On October 12, 1944, when settled down again and it became more—not of a helplessly retarded aside during a situation conference anyone, and then revealed that

Nov 1944

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Denied fresh supplies of Ruhr coal, I continued, the railroads were rapidly exhausting their stocks of coal, as were the gas works; oil and margarine plants were on the verge of shutdowns, and even the supply of coke to the hospitals had become inadequate.¹

Things were literally moving rapidly toward the end. Signs of total anarchy loomed before us. Coal trains no longer reached their destinations but were stopped en route by Gauleiters who confiscated them for their own needs. The buildings in Berlin were unheated; gas and electricity were available only during restricted hours. A howl arose from the Chancellery: Our coal authority had refused to let it have its full consignment for the rest of the winter.

Faced with this situation we could no longer carry out our programs, but only try to produce parts. Once our remaining stocks were used up, armaments production would cease. In drawing this conclusion I underestimated—as no doubt the enemy air strategists did also—the large stocks of materials that had been accumulated in the factories.² An extensive search showed that high production of armaments could in fact be continued, but only for a few months more. Hitler accepted a last "emergency or supplementary program," as we called it, with a calm that seemed truly uncanny. He did not waste a word on the obvious implications, although there could be no doubt what these were.

Around this time Hitler, at a situation conference, commented in the presence of all the generals: "We have the good fortune to have a genius in our armaments industry. I mean Saur. All difficulties are being overcome by him."

General Thomale put in a tactful word: "*Mein Führer*, Minister Speer is here."

"Yes, I know," Hitler replied curtly, annoyed at the interruption. "But Saur is the genius who will master the situation."

Oddly enough, I swallowed this deliberate insult without any perturbation, almost indifferently. I was beginning to take my leave of Hitler.

On October 12, 1944, when the military situation in the West had settled down again and it became possible to speak of a front once more—not of a helplessly retreating horde of men—Hitler took me aside during a situation conference, told me I must not say a word to anyone, and then revealed that he was going to carry out a great offen-

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Oct 1944

sive in the West by concentrating all available forces. "For that you must organize a special corps of German construction workers, one sufficiently motorized to be able to carry out all types of bridge building even if rail transportation should be halted. Stick to the organizational forms that proved their value in the western campaign of 1940."⁸ I pointed out to Hitler that we scarcely had enough trucks left for such a task. "Everything else must be put aside for the sake of this," he declared emphatically. "No matter what the consequences. This will be the great blow which must succeed."

Around the end of November, Hitler said once again that he was staking everything on this offensive. Since he was sure of its success, he added nonchalantly that it was his last effort: "If it does not succeed, I no longer see any possibility for ending the war well. . . . But we will come through," he added, and promptly strayed off into more and more expansive and fantastic notions: "A single breakthrough on the western front! You'll see! It will lead to collapse and panic among the Americans. We'll drive right through their middle and take Antwerp. Then they'll have lost their supply port. And a tremendous pocket will encircle the entire English army, with hundreds of thousands of prisoners. As we used to do in Russia!"

About this time I met Albert Vögler to discuss the desperate situation the bombings had produced in the Ruhr. He asked me bluntly: "When are we going to call it quits?"

I indicated that Hitler was planning to stake everything on the last effort.

Obstinately, Vögler continued: "But does he fully realize that after that we have to call it quits? We're losing too much of our substance. How will we be able to reconstruct if industry goes on taking such a beating even for a few months more?"

"I think," I replied, "that Hitler is playing his last card and knows it, too."

Vögler gave me a skeptical look. "Of course, it's his last card, now that our production is collapsing all over the place. Is this operation going to be directed against the East, to take off the pressure there?"

I avoided an answer.

"Of course, it will be on the eastern front," Vögler said. "Nobody could be so crazy as to strip the East in order to try to hold back the enemy in the West."

From November on, General Guderian, the army chief of staff,

repeatedly called Hitler's resulting from the Russian. Naturally, he wanted the West shifted to the eastern there. At the Nuremberg to justify the continuance on the grounds that Hitler refugees from the East at imprisonment. But the de the contrary.

I held the view that it progressively as possible. I am commander of Army Group armaments aid during the the attack, I set out from hunting lodge near Bonn. diesel car, I saw the switch freight cars. The enemy supplies for the offensive.

Model's headquarters in the Eifel mountains; it was industrialist. Model had no attention of enemy reconnaissance. He was in good luck in breaking through the front were having the right sort of. He had said: "We must but cannot succeed."

As a camp follower I tried. The advancing troops were pered all enemy air activity; transportation had already could move only a foot at car took an hour on the air was by ammunition truck improve.

Model offered all sorts of discipline in newly formed units in the hinterland. But whatever the

lable forces. "For that you construction workers, one at all types of bridge build- ilted. Stick to the organiza- the western campaign of :arcely had enough trucks be put aside for the sake of ter what the consequences. eed."

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Dec 1944

repeatedly called Hitler's attention to the threat to Upper Silesia resulting from the Russian troop concentrations on the eastern front. Naturally, he wanted the divisions assembled for the offensive in the West shifted to the eastern theater of war, to avoid a total breakdown there. At the Nuremberg Trial a number of the defendants attempted to justify the continuance of the war beyond the winter of 1944-45 on the grounds that Hitler had only wanted to save the lives of the refugees from the East and to keep German soldiers from Russian imprisonment. But the decisions he made at that time are proof to the contrary.

I held the view that it was essential to play this "last card" as impressively as possible. I arranged with Field Marshal Model, the commander of Army Group B, to keep him supplied with improvised armaments aid during the offensive. On December 16, the day of the attack, I set out from Berlin, bound for a small headquarters in a hunting lodge near Bonn. Riding through the night in a Reichsbahn diesel car, I saw the switching yards east of the Rhine jammed with freight cars. The enemy bombers had prevented the movement of supplies for the offensive.

Model's headquarters was situated in a narrow wooded valley in the Eifel mountains; it was a large hunting lodge owned by a wealthy industrialist. Model had not built bunkers for fear of attracting the attention of enemy reconnaissance planes to the site months before-hand. He was in good humor, for the surprise assault had succeeded in breaking through the front; his troops were advancing rapidly. We were having the right sort of weather too, just what Hitler had wanted. He had said: "We must have bad weather, otherwise the operation cannot succeed."

As a camp follower I tried to get as close as possible to the front. The advancing troops were in good spirits, for low-lying clouds hampered all enemy air activity. But, by the second day of the offensive, transportation had already reached a chaotic state. Motor vehicles could move only a foot at a time along the three-lane highway. My car took an hour on the average to move two miles, wedged in as it was by ammunition trucks. I kept fearing that the weather might improve.

Model offered all sorts of reasons for this confusion—lack of discipline in newly formed units, for example, or the chaos in the hinterland. But whatever the reasons, the whole scene showed that the

Dec 1944

army had lost its erstwhile famous talent for organization—surely one of the effects of Hitler's three years of command.

The first destination of our laborious progress was a blown-up bridge on the northern wing of the Sixth SS Armored Army. In order to make myself useful I had promised Model to find out how the bridge could be repaired as quickly as possible. The soldiers took a skeptical view of my presence on the scene. My adjutant heard one of them explain: "The Fuehrer rapped him because the bridge isn't ready yet. Now he's got orders to clean up the mess himself." And in fact, the bridge building was going forward very sluggishly. For the construction crews from the Todt Organization, which we had carefully assembled, were stuck in the inextricable traffic jams east of the Rhine, along with the greater part of the engineering materials. Thus the imminent end of the offensive was obviously in the offing, if only because of the lack of essential bridge-building materials.

Inadequate supplies of fuel also hampered operations. The armored formations had started the attack with meager fuel reserves. Hitler, with his optimistic improvidence, had counted on their being able to supply themselves later on from captured American stocks. When the offensive threatened to grind to a halt, I helped Model by telephoning orders to the gasoline plants of the nearby Ruhr area to improvise tank car trains, which they then managed to get to the front.

But the flow of supplies ceased when the foggy weather changed in a few days and the cloudless sky filled with innumerable enemy fighter planes and bombers. A drive by day became a problem even for a fast passenger car; we were often glad to seek the shelter of a small patch of woods. Now the supply services could only operate during the night, groping their way forward, virtually without any visibility, almost from tree to tree.* On December 23, Model told me

* In my travel report, December 31, 1944, I wrote to Hitler:

Vehicles must move at night without headlights. Since all daytime travel is unsafe and nighttime travel is slow, our troop movements amount to only one-half to one-third of the enemy movements, even when the roads on our side are as good as theirs. The enemy can maneuver in broad daylight and with lights on at night. An additional serious obstacle, especially to bringing up supplies, is the condition of the roads in the Eifel region and the Ardennes. . . . Most of the highways have rises and curves which make them as difficult to traverse as Alpine roads. . . . The combat strategy handed down from above, and the resultant orders, do not always take these severe supply

that the offensive had c to continue.

Up to the end of Dec visited various division: artillery, and saw the g machine-gun position. small area; they had si visited Sepp Dietrich, : now commander of an ! in the vicinity of the B. few Old Fighters of the ion he too had parted versation soon turned t decreed with increasing "at any cost." He refu that even the elite divis the Americans. It was i tough opponents, soldie added, "we are receivi been cut by the air attack

As if to illustrate ou rupted by a low-level at tions. Howling and exp yellow hues, droning mo by this scene of military lations had given such a

Protected by darkness in the morning of Dec Poser, my liaison office o'clock the following m and again we had to se twenty-two hours to cov miles.

Hitler's western head: dennes offensive, was at

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e industries.⁶ Dismayed and
, turning to Hitler, he cried

Jan 1944

out solemnly: "Then, Herr Speer, you bear the historic guilt for the
loss of the war for the lack of a few hundred thousand soldiers! Why
don't you say yes for once! Consider it! Your fault!" For a moment
we all stood there fretful, stony, indecisive—then Hitler decided in
favor of Goebbels and winning the war.

This conversation was followed by an armaments discussion in
which Goebbels and his state secretary, Naumann, sat in as Hitler's
guests. As had been common lately, Hitler passed me over in the
course of the discussion; he did not ask my opinion but turned only
to Saur. I was cast in the role of a mute listener. After the conference
Goebbels remarked to me that it had struck him as strange to see with
what indifference I let Saur push me aside. But all that was involved
by now was empty talk. The failure of the Ardennes offensive meant
that the war was over. What followed was only the occupation of
Germany, delayed somewhat by a confused and impotent resistance.

I was not the only one who avoided such tussles. An air of general
indifference had overcome headquarters. It could not be explained
solely as the result of lethargy, overwork, and Hitler's psychological
influence. Instead of the violent clashes, the tensions of the preceding
years and months among numerous hostile interests, groups, and
cliques fighting for Hitler's favor and trying to shift the responsibility
for the more and more frequent defeats, there now prevailed a dis-
interested silence which was in itself an anticipation of the end. When,
for example, during this period Saur succeeded in having Himmler
replaced by General Buhle as chief of armaments for the army,* it was
hardly commented on, although it meant a loss of power for Himmler.
There was no real atmosphere of work any longer. Whatever was
happening made no impression, since everything was overshadowed
by awareness of the inexorable end.

My trip to the front had kept me away from Berlin for more than
three weeks—but in fact it was no longer possible to govern from the
capital. The chaotic conditions everywhere made central guidance of
the armaments organization more and more complicated—and also
more and more meaningless.

* *Führerprotokoll*, January 3–5, 1944, Point 24. Saur had repeatedly pro-
tested to Hitler that Himmler's deputy, SS Obergruppenführer Jüttner, kept
interfering with the system of self-responsibility we had established for indus-
try. When he heard the details, Hitler was so angry that he had Himmler re-
placed.

Jan 12, 1944

On January 12, the great Soviet offensive in the East, which Guderian had predicted, finally began. Our defensive line collapsed along a broad front. Even the more than two thousand modern German tanks which were standing still in the West could no longer have countered the superiority of the Soviet troops at this point.

A few days afterward we were standing around in the so-called Ambassadors' Room at the Chancellery, a tapestried anteroom to Hitler's main office, waiting for the situation conference to begin. When Guderian arrived—he had been delayed by a call on Japanese Ambassador Oshima—an orderly in a plain black-and-white SS uniform opened the door to Hitler's office. We walked across the heavy, handwoven rug to the map table by the windows. The huge table top, a single slab of marble, had come from Austria; it was blood-red, striated with the beige and white cross sections of an ancient coral reef. We took our positions on the window side; Hitler sat facing us.

The German army in Courland was hopelessly cut off. Guderian tried to convince Hitler that this position should be abandoned and the army transported across the Baltic Sea. Hitler disagreed, as he always did when asked to authorize a retreat. Guderian did not give in, Hitler insisted, the tone sharpened, and finally Guderian opposed Hitler with an openness unprecedented in this circle. Probably fired by the effects of the drinks he had had at Oshima's, he threw aside all inhibitions. With flashing eyes and the hairs of his mustache literally standing on end, he stood facing Hitler across the marble table. Hitler, too, had risen to his feet.

"It's simply our duty to save these people, and we still have time to remove them!" Guderian cried out in a challenging voice.

Infuriated, Hitler retorted: "You are going to fight on there. We cannot give up these areas!"

Guderian held firm: "But it's useless to sacrifice men in this senseless way," he shouted. "It's high time! We must evacuate those soldiers at once!"

What no one had thought possible now happened. Hitler appeared visibly intimidated by this assault. Strictly speaking, he really could not tolerate this insubordination, which was more a matter of Guderian's tone than his argument. But to my astonishment Hitler shifted to military arguments, maintaining that a withdrawal to the ports was bound to result in general disorganization and even higher losses than continuing the defense. Once again Guderian vigorously pointed

out that every tactical detail was out and that carrying out the plan was stuck to his decision.

Was this clash the syn- still had the last word. I had declared that he could not do what was coming. This mentally intact, after all, had been numbed by this vic- his objections more moving Hitler, traces of vene- first time matters had changed. The novelty was almost gone, sure, Hitler had still saved the same time it was very little

In the face of the rapid change, me advisable to travel to make sure that my orders were not being undermined by the not being undermined by the went to Oppeln and met the commander of the army name only. Their tanks captured in the course Russians were from Oppeln were leaving; in our hands behind.

In my room hung an It showed a yowling mol guillotine. Off to one side

In the desperate situation gripped by increasing : haunted my fitful sleep. repressed by day or night the populace rise in fury and kill them as in La C sometimes talked about firmly that the enemy of the Third Reich. I shared

Jan 21, 1944

A telephone call from Colonel von Below, my liaison man to Hitler, startled me out of the torments of that night. The previous week I had urgently pointed out to Hitler that since the Ruhr had now been cut off from the rest of the Reich, the loss of Upper Silesia would necessarily bring about rapid economic collapse. In a teletype message on January 21, I had again called Hitler's attention to the importance of Upper Silesia and asked permission to ship "at least 30 to 50 percent of the January production" to Schörner's army group.⁶

The purpose of this message was also to support Guderian, who was still trying to persuade Hitler to stop the offensive efforts in the West and throw the few still functioning armored forces into the breach in the East. At the same time I had pointed out that the Russian enemy was "carrying out his supply tasks in close formation, visible from a great distance in the present snowy landscape. Since the commitment of the German fighter planes in the West is yielding hardly any tangible results, it might be good to apply this weapon concentratedly here, where it is still highly esteemed." Below reported that Hitler, with a sarcastic smile, had declared my remark was to the point but had issued no orders. Did Hitler think that his real enemy lay in the West? Did he feel solidarity with, let alone sympathy for, Stalin's regime? I recalled a good many earlier remarks of his which could possibly be interpreted in that sense and which might be seen as the motivation for his conduct at this time.

The next day I tried to continue my journey to Kattowitz, the center of the Silesian industrial region, but I never got there. Rounding a curve on the sheet-ice road, I collided with a heavy truck. My chest had crushed the steering wheel and even twisted the steering column, and I sat, gasping for air, on the steps of a village tavern, pale and distraught. "You look like a cabinet minister after a lost war," Poser said wryly. The car was out of commission; an ambulance took me back. When I was on my feet again I was at least able to find out by telephone from my assistants in Kattowitz that all the arrangements we had made were being carried out.

On the ride back to Berlin, Hanke, the Breslau Gauleiter, showed me through the party headquarters, a building by the great architect Schinkel which had recently been renovated. "The Russians will never get their hands on this," he exclaimed emotionally. "I'd rather burn it down." I remonstrated, but Hanke insisted. He didn't give a

damn about Breslau if it were said. But finally I succeeded in getting at least this building out of the hands of the Russians.

Back in Berlin, I tried to show Hitler the photos I had taken during my trip. I had the vague hope that the photos of the old men, trudging through the bitter cold—might stir Hitler to order him to sue him at least to stem the flow of some troops from the West. Hitler, he roughly pushed me away, "whether they no longer interest me."

On January 24, 1945, Guderian came to see me. He explained the situation bluntly that the war was lost. He tried to slide out of the affair with an expression of astonishment, the opinion of the military situation. The difference Hitler spluttered that he would be punished with the sword, he said, was at liberty to speak. forbid generalizations and conclusions. That remains my affair. He said else that the war is lost will have serious consequences for him and his rank and prestige!"

No one dared say a word. We left the room. From now on I appeared at the situation conference. His presence alone was enough. Brunner, the Gestapo chief.

* But not for long: A few months later, out regard for human lives or historical value, Dr. Spielhagen, publicly by Flettner, shortly before the surrender, city in one of the few existing p.

March 19, 1942, Point 42, Point 9. The *Office* s declaration of bank- c dictator."

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"The Fuehrer has decided," or, "In the Fuehrer's opinion," even if we had fought these items through over his objections, or had ourselves proposed something that merely did not elicit any protest from Hitler. In this respect my strategy resembled Bormann's. In 1942, as the minutes indicate, I had twenty-five conferences on armaments with Hitler, in 1943 twenty-four. In 1944 these discussions were reduced to thirteen, a sign of my dwindling influence. In 1945, I had only two opportunities to discuss armaments questions with Hitler, since from February 1945 on I let Saur represent me at the conferences. See also W. A. Boelcke, ed., *Deutschlands Rüstung im Zweiten Weltkrieg: Hitlers Konferenzen mit Albert Speer 1942-1945* (Frankfurt am Main, 1969).

2. Based on the Czech 38 T tank. In October 1944, I tried once more to win Hitler over to the idea of light tanks: "On the southwestern front (Italy) reports on the cross-country mobility of the Sherman have been very favorable. The Sherman climbs mountains which our tank experts consider inaccessible to tanks. One great advantage is that the Sherman has a very powerful motor in proportion to its weight. Its cross-country mobility on level ground (in the Po Valley) is, as the Twenty-Sixth Armored Division reports, definitely superior to that of our tanks. Everyone involved in tank warfare is impatiently waiting for lighter and therefore more maneuverable tanks which, simply by having superior guns, will assure the necessary fighting power."
3. Quotation from Hitler's speech at Obersalzberg, June 26, 1944, to a large group of industrialists.
4. If I recall rightly, the cadets' training academy was committed to the area around Astrakhan.
5. From November 20 to November 24, I was at Obersalzberg. Hitler left there on November 22 for his headquarters at Rastenburg.
6. The State Opera House on Unter den Linden, destroyed by bombing, was rebuilt on orders from Goering issued April 18, 1941.

CHAPTER 18: Intrigues

1. Three weeks after Hitler's January 8, 1943, draft call he issued a proclamation urging fulfillment of an increased production quota for tanks.
2. Meeting of Central Planning, January 26, 1943. The agenda was concerned with "the transfer of one million Germans to the armaments

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diesel fuel reserves together amounted to 760,000 metric tons. Production before the attacks was 230,000 metric tons.

A monthly average of 111,000 tons of bombs was dropped over Germany during the second quarter of 1944. Only one-twentieth of that amount (5160 metric tons) was dropped on the fuel industry in May, only one-fifth (20,000 tons) in June. In October 1944 the RAF dropped one-seventeenth of its bombs on fuel facilities, the American air force one-eighth. In November 1944, however, the RAF dropped one-quarter and the Americans one-third of their bomb loads on fuel plants. (See W. F. Craven and J. L. Cate, *The Army Air Forces in World War II* [Chicago, 1949] Vol. II, and Wagenführ, *Die deutsche Industrie im Kriege 1939-1945*, *Op. cit.*) Since the RAF's night attacks using a mix of incendiary and explosive bombs proved particularly effective against fuel plants and refineries, before November the RAF missed a great opportunity for striking the closer, more easily spotted targets in the Ruhr area and along the coast.

8. From memorandum dated July 28, 1944.
9. Craven and Cate, *op. cit.*, Vol. II.
10. Hitler established these guidelines on August 13, 1942 in the presence of Keitel, Schmudt, Admiral Kranke, General of the Engineers Jakob, Dorsch, and me. (*Führerprotokoll*, August 13, 1942, Point 48.)
11. As recorded on June 5, 1944; in addition nearly 6,000,000 cubic yards were used for submarine pens and other projects in France.
12. See *Führerprotokoll*, June 3-5, 1944, Point 16. Development of the V-1 had moved rapidly thanks to the energetic intervention of Milch, who had gone to the rocket test site in Peenemünde and realized that the complicated procedure was producing only meager results. In the face of the tacit resistance even of my Ministry, he was able to earn the credit for having developed and produced, at only a fraction of the cost and effort, a different weapon which did everything that had been expected of the Peenemünde rocket.
13. In his June 26, 1944 speech to the industrialists, after the three military catastrophes, Hitler stated: "I often feel that we will have to undergo all the trials the devil and hell can devise before we achieve Final Victory. . . . I may be no pious churchgoer, but deep within me I am nevertheless a devout man. That is to say, I believe that he who fights valiantly obeying the laws which a god has established and who never capitulates but instead gathers his forces time after time and always pushes forward—such a man will not be abandoned by the Lawgiver. Rather, he will ultimately receive the blessing of

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14. Three weeks previously, denounced these leanings
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15. See *Führerprotokoll*, Jun
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16. Bormann refused (letter
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3. See *Führerprotokoll*, Jun
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4. See *Führerprotokoll*, Jun
5. See travel report, Septer
6. According to the U. S.
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The Morality of the “Golden Pheasants”

The Reichsführer SS and the Secretary to the Führer were friends as long as appearances needed to be kept up; and either innocently or consciously, their wives played the game. The cordial relationship was actually based on the fact that Heinrich Himmler, though married, was sharing his life with a woman who did not share his name. Hedwig Potthast had been his secretary for some time, and she was the reason why he was separated from his wife. Her parents criticized her severely for the improper relationship, but the Reichsführer SS wished to avoid a divorce scandal.

Since Hedwig had a child by him—her son, Helge, was born in February 1942—he wanted to offer her at least a house. But typically, he, the master of vast business areas in the concentration camps, did not have the money to build one. So he knocked on the door of “dear Martin,” from whom other members of the Nazi elite had obtained large sums of money before.

Himmler got 80,000 Reichsmarks not, like the generals and ministers, as an endowment, but as a loan, at—unless SD chief Schellenberg exaggerated—an outrageously high interest rate which the debtor, saddled with two families, found hard to carry in spite of his minister's income. “Häschen” (Bunny), as he called his sweetheart,

Jan 1944

when, after all the theaters were closed as part of the total war effort, she was sent to work in an armament factory at a tedious ten-hour-a-day job on the assembly line. But he flared up in a fit of jealousy when she wanted to join the Wehrmacht Nachrichtenhelferinnen (women's auxiliary signal corps); many of those girls, he moralized, were nothing but "mattresses" for the home-front soldiers. In February 1945 he became even more indignant at Manja's brother for not being at the front but gallivanting around Prague on obscure intelligence missions with Manja's approval. "He and M. take it for granted," Bormann raged in a letter to his wife, "that others fight and risk their lives, even for them! Nope, Gerda baby, those aren't our kind of people."

The course the affair took is too revealing of Bormann's character to let it go unmentioned. Besides, strange as it may seem, the story also had a political aspect. It might serve as a typical example of how a person at the levers of power can evolve maxims for general application from personal situations: after the war, the Secretary to the Führer was going to make the *ménage à trois* he treated himself to on occasion, with the more or less voluntary approval of his wife, a duty or at least a moral obligation for as many German men as possible. The bloodletting at the front was bound to result in a shortage of men and a surplus of women, but for the further extension of its power the Greater Germanic Reich needed as many births as possible in the immediate future.

Perhaps it even was Gerda who gave her husband the final push for such planning. During the second half of January 1944 she wrote that the affair with Manja and her husband's twice-blessed happiness suggested that there should be a law after the war allowing every man worth his salt to have two wives. "The condition is, of course, that the two women tolerate each other; in most cases, that will be difficult. And Manja is so talented that in the long run she would not find her role of concubine satisfactory."

In her next letters Gerda Bormann continued to spin the thread and even designed an official form by which the spouses could sign an agreement to a "people's emergency marriage" as a threesome. Gerda felt that women like Manja were really too valuable—in a racial and biological sense, obviously—not to have children. Gerda suggested to Martin: "You can certainly be helpful to Manja, but you have to see to it that Manja has a child one year and I have one the next, so that you always have one woman around who's in good shape." The children, she felt, could all grow up together on the Bor-

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The Morality of the "Golden Pheasants"

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mann property at the Schluchsee in the Black Forest, looked after by the pregnant wife while the other attended to social and marital duties with their mutual husband in Berlin or at Obersalzberg.

Bormann reacted skeptically. Such a marriage arrangement could never work out, but he agreed in principle and as usual noted his reply in the margin of Gerda's letter. "The Führer contemplates something like it." Hitler, in fact, had pondered for a long time how to make up for the wartime loss of human lives, and Bormann had notes on this in his safe. At a late tea session, he therefore had no trouble at all bringing up the subject Gerda had suggested. On January 29, 1944, shortly after Gerda's initial observation, he drafted a "Note Re: Safeguarding the Future of the German People," which in ten typewritten pages summed up the latest Führer monologue and "earlier discussions and reflections."

In typical Nazi-German, inspired by Hitler's speeches, he wrote: "Our racial situation will be *disastrous* after this war . . . There can be no doubt that we will win the war militarily, but we will lose it racially unless we make drastic readjustments." And further on: "Now, it is a fact that women who find themselves without a man after this war cannot have children by the Holy Spirit but only by men who have survived." Consequently: "It is desirable that wherever possible, women who do not have or find a husband after the war enter into a marriage-like relationship which will produce as many children as possible." (See the Appendix, pages 474-479.)

For his own purposes, Bormann did not want the relationship to be quite as permanent as his human-breeding schedule pictured the three-way marriage to be; as usual, where the Nazi *Bonzocracy* was concerned, there was a wide gap between theory and practice, between publicly proclaimed maxims and personal conduct. Unfortunately, this did not escape the notice of the general public. On the ground that scandals were bad for the morale of the German people, Bormann and Goebbels competed with each other in intra-Party warnings, urging the Nazi demigods to observe some discretion; under no condition must they attract attention by their extravagant life style.

But although in the past two years most Germans had moved closer together inside their houses, taking in the air-raid victims assigned to them as subtenants by the authorities, Bormann, who already had houses at Pullach and Obersalzberg, remodeled two more domiciles for his family—the villa at the Schluchsee and the country house in Mecklenburg. The Black Forest house, he advised his wife,

Goebbels

1924

52: When the Going gets Tough

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Febr 9

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

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

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

Jan 25

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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On April Berlin.³⁸ He Strasse, and from six hundred and death as execute looted ately.³⁹

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Scene 2

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

May 24

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

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

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

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

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June 1944

53: The Long-Awaited Day

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

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

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

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

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

June 5, '44

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

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

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

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

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

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the Cherbourg peninsula, and an invasion fleet approaching Normandy. 'Thank God, at last!' said Goebbels. 'This is the final round.'¹³

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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July '44

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

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

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

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

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

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

him. Goebbels decided to approach Hitler on his own.⁴⁴

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July '44

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

With suitable contrition he added:

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

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

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

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

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

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54: Valkyrie

July 20, 1944

July 20

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

* was he prepared to shoot Speer?

I just spoke with the Führer myself a few minutes ago,' Goebbels contradicted him. Then: 'Are you a true National Socialist?' 'Through and through, Herr Minister! But are you loyal to the Führer?'²³

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

REICHSLÄITER DR GOEBBELS.³⁴

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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55: Total War

July 22, '44

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Aug 2, 1944

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

* * *

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Oct 14, 1944

56: The Specter of the Hangman

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

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

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

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

From Canada, Churchill traveled onward to Moscow. Reading this

Oct 14

Oct 4

Oct '44

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

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

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

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

Oct 19
Oct 27
Hitler's second major decision was to create a Volkssturm, a people's army of every remaining male between the ages of sixteen and sixty.¹⁴ That was a task that Goebbels could throw himself into. Recruiting posters went up on Thursday, October 19. Seventy thousand Berliners volunteered at once, with twenty thousand more on Saturday and thirty-five thousand the next day. In Silesia, Karl Hanke mustered over one hundred thousand men on the castle square in Breslau. Broadcasting nationwide on October 27 Goebbels recalled the words that Clausewitz had used of the Prussian Landssturm, raised to fight Napoleon at Leipzig: 'It shall spread like a bushfire and shall finally smite the territory on which the invader has set foot.' 'We cannot,' said Goebbels, 'be swayed from our resolute and immutable decision ... to fight until a peace can be attained which will guarantee to our people their right to life, their national independence, and, in a broader sense, the basis of their existence, thus justifying the sacrifices.' This sounded very much like a willingness to discuss terms. 'The Führer,' he continued, 'with whom I spent several days at his headquarters, stands like a rock amid the surging tide.'¹⁵ One of Hitler's adjutants wrote privately that evening, 'Dr Goebbels just spoke. ... It's a treat to hear him every time.'¹⁶

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Nov 44 → Dec

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

Nov 12

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

Nov 25

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

Dec 1.

Hitler left the Wolf's Lair and returned to Berlin for an operation on his throat. Goebbels too felt poorly; he had his chest X-rayed but nothing was found.³⁰ He called at the chancellery on December 1 and stayed with Hitler until five-thirty A.M. (He would call this one of the most interesting discussions he ever had with the Führer.) His voice still only a croak, Hitler revealed more about his secret plans for the coming Ardennes offensive. 'When I consider,' marveled Goebbels afterward, 'how sickly and weak he was when I saw him bed-ridden several weeks ago, when he already outlined these same great plans to me ... then I can only say that a miracle has come over him.'

Hitler's main problem would be to inspire his generals, because they were infected with defeat. Nothing, he said, matched the western front in importance now. If his offensive succeeded they could Dunkirk the British all over again, blame the Americans, and restart their V-1 bombardment of southern England. As for the V-2, Hitler added meaningfully: 'Mr Churchill had every reason to keep it secret from his public. With no lack of confidence in the final outcome himself, Hitler mentioned

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that after the war he was going to give fine estates to his best political and military officers.³¹

It was unlikely that Reichsmarschall Göring would qualify. Every night the British destroyed yet another German city.

Hitler expressed uncomprehending sorrow about Göring. How could he still live in such repugnant luxury, wearing his pompous pearl-gray silk uniform? He had advised Göring, he said, to spend less time out at Carinhall surrounded by his assorted aunts, cousins, and sisters-in-law. Göring had even taken to receiving generals in a floor-length dressing gown and furry slippers. Hitler was determined to smash the camarilla of corrupt generals surrounding the Reichsmarschall, and to help his better qualities come to the fore.

In a British fire-raid on Heilbronn on December 3, 1947 people were burned alive. Göring was powerless to prevent it. At midday on the sixth Goebbels found him out at Carinhall sipping tea surrounded by elderly female relatives and sycophants like Philipp Bouhler (the euthanasia mass-murderer) and Bruno Loerzer, Göring's crony in the Richthofen squadron and former chief of Luftwaffe personnel (Hitler had sacked him). For four hours Göring whined and argued, pleading his innocence of the Luftwaffe's failures. He blamed everybody but himself.³²

Two days later, at 6:45 P.M. on December 3, 1944 a chauffeur-driven car brought Hitler over to No. 20 Hermann-Göring Strasse to pay what proved to be his last visit to the Goebbels household. The children put on long dresses made from old curtains in 'Uncle Führer's' honor. As he was helped out of his greatcoat, Magda's mother found him a shadow of his former self.³³ His hands trembled uncontrollably. The children had not seen him for four years. Whereas Helga and Hilde (at twelve and ten, the eldest) had earlier captivated him, now his attention turned to six-year-old Hedda. She had eyes only for Günter Schwägermann, however, her father's one-eyed adjutant: She declared she was going to marry him, explaining: 'He can take his eye out!' Hitler beamed special favors on Hellmut too; two days earlier Goebbels had read out to him his little boy's school essay on 'November 9, 1923'—one of the party's high holy days—and tears of unkind laughter rolled down their cheeks. 'You would never have guessed,' his father had indulgently dictated into his diary, 'that he was the son of a writer.'³⁴ Surrounded by the paintings which Goebbels had retrieved from the bunker for the occasion Hitler talked of the devastation in Berlin and his sorrow at the loss of life. But he had done what he could, he sanctimoniously reminded Goebbels, to prevent this kind of barbarism in 1939. Then he chuckled at the rash prophecies the British were uttering about the war's coming end. Things were looking up, he said—an allusion to his new offensive, now only days away. 'I of course,' Goebbels prided himself, 'understand precisely what he's getting at.'³⁵

At eight-thirty P.M. Hitler made his excuses and returned to the chancellery.³⁶ Werner Naumann, towering over them in his S.S. brig-

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dier's uniform, commented afterward in flattering terms on the astonishing mental and physical health of their Führer. Goebbels registered this without comment in his diary, but he told his former adjutant Prince Schaumburg-Lippe, 'Be glad you didn't see him. The Hitler you once believed in doesn't exist any more.'³⁷

MAGDA had fallen head over heels for Dr Naumann, a more dangerous rival to Goebbels than Hanke ever was. In charge of the secret project to microfilm the Goebbels Diaries, Naumann had begun dictating passages from them clandestinely to one of his private secretaries, Dorothea von Arnim. He planned to use them to overthrow the minister when the time came.³⁸ Naumann's own marriage had now completed its seventh year, and was entering the predictable doldrums despite their four children. Like Hanke before him, he regarded Magda as a tragic heroine. Guessing what was going on, Goebbels shortly ordered Naumann to end the relationship. Magda found some solace in her Buddhism and in writing poetry, some of which she sent to Naumann. As the nights lengthened, she spent more time with her husband. Often she found him standing quietly at the bedside of their six sleeping children.³⁹ Already they were nurturing dark plans for their brood.

A week after his visit Hitler left for the western front.

At five-thirty A.M. on Saturday December 16, 1944 his Ardennes offensive began, a last gamble. Artillery barrages drenched the five American infantry divisions holding the target sector. Three German armies backed by 170 bombers, ninety ground-attack planes, and fifteen hundred fighter planes punched at the American lines. Simultaneously V-1s and V-2s rained down on Antwerp, the final goal of his armies. One V-2 killed two thousand Allied servicemen in the Rex cinema in Antwerp. Goebbels, who had joined his family out at Lanke, ordered a total media blackout about the operation, overruling even Hitler, who had wanted a single-sentence, upbeat communiqué. By evening it was plain that Goebbels was right—Eisenhower was still in the dark about what had hit him.⁴⁰ Not until Sunday evening did the enemy announce the shocking news that Hitler had managed to launch this audacious operation (although they gave the credit to Field Marshal von Rundstedt).⁴¹ On Monday the eighteenth Hitler's High Command tersely confirmed it, provoking exultation in Germany's bomb-devastated cities. Goebbels drove out to Lanke again with Magda: Their six children were standing on the steps and sang a welcoming chorus which they had rehearsed all day with their governess.

As Hitler's tanks rolled on it was like the headiest days of 1940; the Allied air forces were virtually grounded by bad weather. Thousands of prisoners were taken, hundreds of tanks destroyed. For Magda too it was a kind of victory: This was their thirteenth wedding anniversary and she had kept her family together despite everything.

At one A.M. Hitler phoned them from his forward HQ in western Germany, excitedly predicting that the U.S. First Army was already

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Dec 14/4 → Jan '45

beaten. Both men agreed that the enemy had not grasped what was happening—Eisenhower was still talking about a localized Nazi push by three or four divisions. Before hanging up Hitler reminisced with Magda about the wedding. 'The time since then has gone in a flash,' dictated Goebbels, the specter momentarily forgotten.⁴²

By December 21 the Germans had taken twenty-five thousand American prisoners and destroyed 350 tanks. Eisenhower called off all other operations to cope with the emergency. Stalin did nothing to assist his beleaguered Allies. Goebbels still warned against making damaging predictions.⁴³ This was as well, because on the twenty-third, with Hitler's broad armored blade thrust forty miles deep into the American ribs, the skies cleared and the Allied air forces struck back. Although history shows that the Nazi offensive was finally halted on the twenty-fourth Goebbels still hoped for a miracle. Using a typewriter to spare his Führer the struggle with his spidery scrawl, he sent him a Christmas message ('even if there's no real Christmas for us') marveling 'that once again, as so oft before, you are leading us out of the dilemma; that you are a lustrous example to us all; that you teach us how mind and will-power overcome matter and corporeality; and that therefore you tower above everybody and everything.'⁴⁴

Even now Goebbels still would not permit any fanfares about Hitler's big offensive. Out at Lanke the children put on their long dresses for Christmas Eve. Snuffing out the candles on the tree that night, after everybody had been given their presents, Magda said to her secretary, 'Next year we'll surely be at peace.'⁴⁵

After Christmas Goebbels' sister Maria and his mother left Lanke, and he never saw them again.⁴⁶

HIS New Year's Eve broadcast to the Reich was an empty panegyric. One propaganda official noted in his diary, 'I can't help it—overall it was a let-down.'⁴⁷ Public reaction to Goebbels' next article 'Der Führer,' with its glowing references to Hitler's modesty, his love of peace, and his foresight, was downright hostile. 'He has the Sixth Sense,' Goebbels had written, 'the gift to see what is denied the eyes of other mortals.' A Gestapo agent overheard one less gifted female tartly commenting that this was no doubt why Hitler had consistently picked as his closest friends people like the Italians who had betrayed him the most. 'There's no pulling the wool over his eyes,' Goebbels had written. In that case, grumbled the public, it was hard to understand the bomb plot of the Twentieth of July.⁴⁸

A few days later he went to Hitler's forward headquarters, near Frankfurt, for a two-day Cabinet-level discussion on injecting even more men into the armed forces.⁴⁹ On the first day, January 3, 1945 a blazing row developed. Speer objected that it sounded like a *levée en masse*, a people's army, again. He refused to be a part of it. Glaring at him, Goebbels called out: 'Then on your shoulders be the blame before history that we lose this war for the want of a few hundred thousand soldiers!'⁵⁰

Dec 21

Jan 3

need someone like him

He remained alone with Hitler until supper at eight. The Führer was so exhausted by the dispute that his left arm started trembling violently, and Morell had to give him extra injections.⁵¹

Under the new Goebbels *Aktion*, 240,000 men were promised to the army during the first quarter of 1945; the figure was not even approximately reached.⁵² He had bitten off more than he could chew and he met obstructionism all the way. Ludicrously, Rosenberg still refused to disband his ministry for the occupied eastern territories.⁵³ The corrupt Nazi upper echelons were interested only in their own well-being. On

January 26 Goebbels drew Hitler's attention to General von Hanneken, who had shipped ham, lard, and furniture from Denmark to Paris, then used the truck to pick up wines and spirits for his own use (instead of urgently needed spare parts); Hanneken's motor launch had consumed a thousand liters of gasoline during July 1944—a month in painful memory.⁵⁴ On March 20 Goebbels pointed out to Hitler that the air force, which had had 172 active generals in 1941, now had 327 despite its reduction in size.⁵⁵ His campaign against Göring continued unabated, and unavailing, almost to the end.

WHEN he had returned to Berlin from Hitler's HQ on January 5 the first complete print of the epic movie *Kolberg* had just arrived from Ufa's color laboratories. Goebbels viewed it privately that evening. Its gigantic battle scenes and the heroic performances by its stars were among the finest ever filmed by the German movie industry. The simultaneous public premières were held on January 30 at the Taubentzen Palace theater and at Ufa's movie theater on Alexander Platz, directly after the broadcast of what was to prove Hitler's last speech (it lasted only sixteen minutes). The movie was a stunning success, particularly at the 'Alex'—there were fifteen curtain calls for the stars.⁵⁶ It was also shown that day to the troops holding out in Hitler's Atlantic fortress La Rochelle, where a fighter plane had delivered it only hours before. 'The film is so well suited to our times,' wrote one of Hitler's personal staff, 'that one would almost ascribe clairvoyant powers to those whose brainchild it is—it was conceived as far back as 1942.'⁵⁷ Goebbels also had the film flown into the fortresses of Breslau and Danzig, and as more copies became available they were sent to embattled Upper Silesia and the bridgeheads of Frankfurt-on-Oder, Neisse, and Königsberg. Copies were also provided for the personal use of Göring, Himmler, Dönitz, and Guderian, who were evidently as much in need of moral sustenance as these fortresses.⁵⁸

* Whatever happened to Kolberg
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57: Kill off the Prisoners

IF Goebbels now realized that the war could not be won he kept this realization to himself. On January 12, 1945 Stalin's great offensive from the Baranov bridgehead on the Vistula began. With his eastern front crumbling Hitler abandoned his offensive in the Ardennes and returned to Berlin. The Red Army did not halt until it reached the river Oder, just east of Berlin.

From January 24 on Goebbels visited Hitler's chancellery almost every evening for half an hour or an hour alone with Hitler. After their talk on January 28, he returned home sunk in thought. 'It is true,' he dictated to Richard Otte for the diary afterward, 'that a great man has to await his great hour, and that there's nothing one can do by way of suggestions that will help him. It's more a matter of instinct than of any logical process. If the Führer should succeed in turning back the tide of events—and I am firmly convinced that the chance will one day come for that—then he will be not the man of the century, but the man of the millennium.'²

With large sections of the front now fighting on German soil propaganda's greatest hour had come. Goebbels instructed the gau propaganda officials on February 5; ugly reports were coming in of collapsing troop morale. Their propaganda must be firm, realistic, and unhysterical, and not deal in illusions. 'This is not the time for empty phrases,' he said. They had to offer proof that Germany could still triumph. 'Unfortunately it's not possible to speak openly and authoritatively of the weightiest political factor in our favor, namely the problems currently facing the enemy and the friction within the enemy coalition, as any such utterances would damage this promising development.'³ Goebbels exploited the aftermath of the Ardennes battle to spread rumors over Radio Arnhem and by breaking into the B.B.C.'s news broadcasts that the British Field Marshal Montgomery was claiming all the credit for halting Hitler's offensive. It was one of his more successful gambits. The Americans were taken in and Goebbels' English counterpart Brendan Bracken had to make a formal apology to General Eisenhower.⁴

Sustaining Hitler's morale became no less important than that of the home front. As the Ardennes operations went into reverse, Goebbels scoured the books for historic parallels. He sent the Führer one such passage from a book on Alexander the Great.⁵ During February he began re-reading Thomas Carlyle's eight-volume biography of Frederick the

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Great which he had first dipped into fifteen years earlier.⁶ Visiting Hitler at the end of the month, he related several chapters of the monarch's life story which, he recorded, greatly moved them both. 'What an example to us all,' he noted early in March. 'And what a solace and comfort in these dark days!'⁷ He saw an uncanny parallel between the foppish Hermann Göring and the king's feckless brother, and sent that chapter over to Hitler underlining the harsh treatment that the king had meted out to his sibling.

new?

THE air raids continued with unremitting violence. The Ufa company had compiled a horrifying feature-length documentary on them, but as Ribbentrop had commissioned it Goebbels forbade its release.⁸ A feud, after all, was a feud.

In mid-January the propaganda ministry briefed every gauleiter on the latest British bombing tactics: Four to six hundred heavy bombers would attack small cities repeatedly, saturating every square yard with incendiaries and with high-explosive bombs fused to delay detonation long enough for the weapon to penetrate to the crowded basements of even the tallest buildings.⁹ The morale problems multiplied. The view became widespread that an occupation of Germany by the Anglo-Americans would not be 'all that bad' if it put an end to the bombing and the strafing attacks. Goebbels circularized the gauleiters on the need to counter this dangerous defeatism by propagating a base hatred of the imperialist and ideologically bankrupt British and Americans. The new line was to be: 'There is no difference between the bolshevik atrocities in East Prussia and the British and American atrocities on the Rhine.' Their enemies' aim, he suggested, was the same—death to all Germans. 'Gangsters at work!' must be the new leitmotif of their propaganda.¹⁰

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At midday on Saturday February 3 1,003 B-17s attacked the center of Berlin, dropping 2,265 tons of bombs with the intent of creating maximum casualties and chaos among the refugees thronging into the capital. 'Five thousand-pounders,' wrote one American bombardier, adding inexplicably: 'Shacked [i.e. killed] women and children!' Although most of the flak had been withdrawn to the Oder front, twenty-one B-17s were destroyed over the city, and ninety-three suffered battle damage.¹¹ The chancellery was hit again; fires raged, the streets were festooned in trolley-bus wires, but by late afternoon virtual normality had returned.

Hitler began a troglodyte existence in the bunker beneath his chancellery garden. It was not easy for Goebbels to hobble down the steps into the labyrinth of rooms, since the Führer and his staff occupied the remotest rooms at the deepest level, fifty feet beneath the grass and shrubbery. For a time he called on Hitler about every other day.¹² The Führer's cramped study was tiled in olive green and white, and sparsely furnished—Anton Graff's famous portrait of Frederick the Great, a faded

photograph being the only one. With it Goebbels on the Bo-esses into declared. I a world o green velv mentioner hat remot Harald, n heart and these we've Despite al including. The child: they've no concluded can.¹⁴ She oft telephonin encircled I that he int any rate, I thing.¹⁵ T different c Streicher o conceivabl happy and

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Feb '44

photograph of Hitler's mother, and a sofa upholstered in white and blue being the only accouterments.*

With the Russians now so close, on the last day of January 1945 Goebbels had sent Schwägermann out to Lanke, his lakeside mansion on the Bogensee, to evacuate Magda, their six children and two governesses into the air-raid shelter at Schwanenwerder. The next day he declared Berlin a 'fortress city.' Surrounded by her brood, Magda was in a world of self-delusion. From Berthe the milliner's she purchased a green velvet hat, a black turban, and a brown hat trimmed with fur; she mentioned that 'when things calmed down' she'd like to have a brown hat remodeled.¹³ 'The news you'll be hearing isn't rosy,' she wrote to Harald, now in British captivity, on February 10. 'We're all sound in heart and health; but as the whole family belongs together at times like these we've shut down Bogensee and we've all moved back into Berlin. Despite all the air raids our house is still standing and everybody here—including your grandmother and the rest of the family—is well housed. The children find it splendid that there's no school and, thank God, they've noticed nothing of the seriousness of the hour.' 'Papa and I,' she concluded, 'are full of confidence and we're doing our duty as best we can.'¹⁴

She often thought of Hanke, and once or twice they spoke until telephoning was no longer possible as the Russian armies engulfed and encircled Breslau; Hanke, a man of undeniable bravery, wrote to his wife that he intended to hold on until help came from outside. 'I can see at any rate,' he said, 'that the Reich will not succumb and that is the main thing.'¹⁵ The gauleiters, Goebbels had often noted, were all cut from a different cloth than the generals. 'You can be sure,' he wrote to Julius Streicher on his sixtieth birthday, 'that right now we are doing everything conceivable to bring this great fight for the destiny of our people to a happy and victorious end.'¹⁶

ON the following night, February 13, the British bombers crowned their orgy of destruction by obliterating the hitherto unscarred capital of Saxony, Dresden. Overcrowded with a million fleeing human beings—refugees, prisoners, evacuees, and children—a city innocent of air-raid shelters, with all of its flak batteries removed to the eastern front and its fighter squadrons grounded for lack of fuel, Dresden became an inferno within minutes. Between sixty and one hundred thousand men, women, and children were choked to death or burned alive in the ensuing firestorms as this and another British raid three hours later engulfed and incinerated the city. For days after this apocalypse soldiers cremated the bodies five hundred at a time on makeshift pyres in the city center. Tens of thousands more remained interred beneath the ruins.

On February 14 Goebbels saw Hitler at 7:15 P.M. for three-quarters of an hour. He demanded that Göring be stood before the People's Court

* Of which a bloodstained shred survives in private hands in the United States.

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* The Goebbels argument — ~~was~~ 'The
Russians are mean at the altar
end of the stretched rubber band!'

File 44

Feb 17

for negligence; but again Hitler weakly refused. Several times afterward Goebbels had fierce arguments with the Führer about Göring and his way of life; both men agreed that Admiral Dönitz was a shining example, as Raeder had been before him. Goebbels even suggested Dönitz should take over the Luftwaffe. On February 17 he proposed that they formally repudiate the Geneva Convention—why else should Allied pilots feel they could murder, slash, and burn with impunity? They should start executing Allied prisoners: One for each air-raid victim.¹⁷

Hitler told him to draft a proposal.

Two days later, according to one source, the secret twelve-page document was ready in Goebbels' safe.¹⁸ Several people claimed the credit for preventing the plan from being implemented. Ribbentrop's opposition was probably the deciding factor for Hitler.¹⁹ The Führer told Goebbels later, with noticeable regret, that he had allowed Himmler, Keitel, and Bormann to talk him out of it.²⁰ Fritzsche told interrogators that he delayed the radio announcement until the order was rescinded.²¹

Feb. 27

DRESDEN was unmistakably the beginning of the end. As Goebbels contemplated Hitler's stoical attitude to the growing certainty of defeat, comparisons with Frederick the Great again crowded in on him. He put it to Hitler on February 27 that their only aim now must be to set a heroic example to their children's children, in case a similar crisis should ever again beset Germany. Hitler agreed: It was necessary to work for one's people, even if the achievements were only ephemeral.²²

On the last day of February Goebbels broadcast to the nation for the first time in weeks. He spoke for seventy minutes. 'Seen purely militarily,' he admitted straight away, 'the launching of the successful Soviet offensive from the Baranov bridgehead has sharply changed the general war situation, and not to our advantage.' He was not, he said, going to mince his language about this depressing but 'by no means hopeless' situation. The Soviets had mastered a similar crisis in 1941, and the British in 1940. 'The misfortunes that have beset us are very painful but they are in no way synonymous with the forfeiting of our victory and the consequent dissolution of the Reich and the biological extinction of the German people.' They had again stabilized an eastern front, he said, and the territories they had lost would be regained. The indescribable bolshevik atrocities in the east were however 'no products of their fantasy.' 'We would rather die,' he said, echoing Stalin's famous phrase, 'than capitulate.' What was the consequence of the Allies' aerial terrorism? he asked: Just that the Germans hated them even more. He reiterated that they had to believe in victory, 'unless the Goddess of History be just a whore of the enemy.' Now however he added that if victory be denied them then he would consider life no longer worth living, 'neither for myself, nor for my children, nor for all whom I love and together with whom I have fought for so many years for a better and more noble existence.'

He knew, said Goebbels, that people would ask him how victory could still be theirs. He drew on a familiar analogy. 'Today,' he said, 'we're like

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the marathon runner who has thirty-five of the forty-two kilometers behind him.²³

This, his penultimate broadcast, was a brilliant effort. It met a mixed reception. 'When Goebbels speaks,' said S.S. Oberführer Kurt Meyer that evening in British captivity, 'it really grips you.' 'At any rate,' said an army general, 'he has achieved ... a people which willingly cooperates with the government.'²⁴ Others felt differently. Major-General Bruhn, also in British captivity, called the speech 'the most two-faced, hypocritical exhibition there has ever been,' and Major-General von Felbert agreed: 'What a scoundrel he is. If only I could lay hands on that dirty beast, that swine ... this lump of filth, this muck-worm!'²⁵

'You can't give the people confidence with speeches like that,' remarked Dr Ley to his mistress, adding that Hitler and Goebbels never saw the front line. 'These people have no idea how grave the situation on the fronts actually is. If only one of them would leave his comfortable four walls and visit the fronts!'²⁶

Hitler did in fact inspect the Oder front on the first Saturday in March, but when Goebbels visited the Führer on the fourth he refused even to allow the press to report it. Goebbels found him more depressed than ever, and he was horrified at the uncontrollable tremor in Hitler's left hand. His sixth sense was however intact. The Führer bitterly pointed out that while his general staff and Himmler, now commanding the army group on the Oder, had expected the Russians to go for Berlin, he had anticipated that they would first move on Pomerania, to the north-east. He had as usual proved right. Goebbels wondered why Hitler could not get his own way with his own general staff. When the Führer stressed the need to hold the Rhine, Goebbels could only agree: If the British and Americans once got through into central Germany, there would be no need for them to negotiate with Hitler at all. They talked about the Dresden catastrophe—Hitler's own half-sister Angela had written him an eye-witness account of the horrors. Goebbels proudly revealed that Magda and the children would stay with him in Berlin. While Hitler's spirits were still high, the HQ generals with whom Goebbels spoke were very downcast. 'The atmosphere in the Reich chancellery,' noted the propaganda minister, 'is pretty grim. I'd prefer not to go there again because you can't help being infected by the mood.'²⁷

Himmler, like Speer before him, was now skulking in bed with nameless disorders in the clinic at Hohenlychen outside Berlin. On March 7 Goebbels visited him and they warily explored each other's views for two hours and exchanged venomous remarks about Göring and Ribbentrop. Goebbels said that he had warned Hitler that by hanging on to Göring he was asking for trouble—he hinted at a top-level mutiny; but still Hitler refused to draw the appropriate conclusion. Himmler showed that he believed their only chance lay in doing a deal with the west; Goebbels disagreed—Stalin was far more realistic than the hooligans in London and Washington.²⁸

He had evidently given up all hope of a deal with the west. General

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Feb - Mar '44

504 V: THE LOYAL HENCHMAN

Feb
27.

Dittmar noted on February 27, 'Everybody I speak with in the propaganda ministry is in favor of the western solution. But that too is a leap in the dark.'²⁹

March 8.

GENERAL Schörner's troops counter-attacked in Lower Silesia and recaptured Lauban from the Russians. On March 8 Goebbels visited the little market town. Schörner was a popular commander, because he was tough. He told the minister he was hanging deserters in public with a placard round their neck: 'I'm a deserter and refuse to defend German women and children.' This was a general after Goebbels' heart.³⁰

While badly damaged by the fighting, Lauban was still better off than any town that had been bombed, reflected Goebbels. Among the paratroops parading to hear him deliver a fiery and wholly improvised speech on its market square he discovered his former department head Willi Haegert—and a sixteen-year-old, Willy Hübner, who had just earned the Iron Cross for bravery.³¹ Goebbels saw to it that a picture of himself and Hübner went round the world. He shuddered as he drove past the burned-out hulks of Soviet tanks, these steely robots with which Stalin was hoping to subjugate Europe. Back in Görlitz that evening he spoke in the town hall to thousands of soldiers and Volkssturm men. He told them of the children murdered and the women violated by the Russians, and proclaimed à la Ilya Ehrenburg, 'Slay the bolsheviks wherever you find them!' 'This enemy,' he said, 'can be beaten because you've beaten them before! Make them pay dearly in blood for every inch of German soil. We shall fight them in the fields and forests, and in the cities, and in every street and in every building until they have lost so much blood that they're no longer able to fight on.' 'History,' he declared, 'will grant to us the victory, because we alone deserve it.'³² Writing in *Das Reich* he said: 'The only thing that matters is for a people to have the nerve to wait for its great hour and then to use it.' The best thing a warring nation could do, he argued, was to think only of war, and then to devote itself to it body and soul: 'The most total war is always the most merciful.'³³ These were slogans that all sounded very familiar: They had however lost much of their captivating power.

He saw Hitler again on Sunday evening March 11 and told him about Lauban. Hitler told him Göring had recently visited him to discuss the need to 'clear the air politically' toward the enemy. Hitler had retorted that he'd do better to clear the air, period. Clutching at straws, Hitler was convinced the enemy coalition was disintegrating. But they could not deal with the British. Churchill, said Hitler, was running amok—he had got it into his head to destroy Germany, regardless of whether he ruined his empire in the process. In a reversal of his earlier stance Hitler now believed that, if he could inflict a bloody enough reverse on the Russians, the Kremlin might open up toward him: In the resulting separate peace with Russia, he hoped he might still achieve a beneficial partition of Poland, with Hungary and Croatia within the German ægis and freedom to continue operations in the west. Whether he could no

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longer bear to listen to such fateful illusions, or whether he too was wearying of the war, Goebbels decided that one such talk a week with Hitler, on a Sunday evening, was enough—it was worth any number of regular daily visits.³⁴

IT was twelve years to the day since he had set foot in the propaganda ministry on Wilhelm Strasse for the first time as minister. Schinkel's ornate palace had survived five years of continuous air raids, including some of the heaviest in history. Between eight and nine P.M. on March 13 it was hit by a single 4,000-pound blockbuster bomb dropped by a twin-engined Mosquito plane. Goebbels drove straight over, and found his beloved theater, the Throne Room, the Blue Gallery, and all the other fine architectural features on whose restoration he had lavished so many years of effort, leveled to the ground. For a while the fires which had broken out threatened to touch off five hundred bazooka anti-tank weapons he had stockpiled in the building. The front wing had collapsed, and the blast wave had wrought havoc in Hitler's old chancellery too.³⁵ 'The worst imaginable augury for the next twelve years,' reflected Goebbels, and added some nasty remarks at Göring's expense.

Hitler told him that night that in their latest talks Göring had been 'totally shattered'—'But what use is that!' exclaimed Goebbels impotently in his diary. Still chewing over past grievances Hitler also showed him the shorthand record of the conferences in which he, unheeded by his generals, had correctly predicted that the Russians were going for Pomerania next. Together they walked over to watch the firefighters quenching the smoldering ruins of the propaganda ministry.³⁶

On March 16 Goebbels invited the press round to his residence and lectured them for an hour on the barbarity of the Allies in the west.³⁷ He now knew that Ribbentrop's peace feelers to Britain had been rebuffed. Goebbels' emotions were mixed, between *Schadenfreude* and apprehension about his own future. He commented on rumors that Himmler had offered the enemy Hitler's head, 'They're demanding more heads than just Hitler's,' he remarked in his diary.³⁸ Two days later the Americans saturated Berlin's poorer districts with bombs, killing about five hundred people. Telephoning Goebbels to ask about morale, Hitler mentioned that he had been in conference with his generals until six A.M. That day Kolberg was evacuated, almost without a fight; Goebbels saw to it that it was not mentioned in the High Command communiqué.³⁹

One after another all their fortress-cities were captured, except one. On March 20 Gauleiter Karl Hanke sent a dramatic report from Breslau. 'The city was in ruins, but he and his men were making the Russians pay in blood for every inch. 'Gentlemen, nobody is too good to die for Grossdeutschland,' he had proclaimed, quoting the words of Rommel, his commanding officer in France in 1940: 'Attack!' The experience he had gained in the battle for Berlin before 1933 had served him well, he wrote to Goebbels, who reflected once more that this was the type of National Socialist who put their army generals to shame.⁴⁰ Hanke

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March
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managed to get through one phone call on March 29 to Goebbels and Magda, and even to send her a gift; she thanked him in terms of touching warmth, praising his courage and telling him that Hitler had recently called him 'the Nettelbeck of this war.' 'Our fondest wishes always go with him,' wrote Magda to Hanke's trustiest friend, 'and I sincerely believe that he will one day get out.'⁴¹ Hanke's men fought on until they had only two hundred guns, seven tanks, and eight assault guns left; the city held out until May 6—by which time Hitler had appointed him Himmler's successor as Reichsführer; Hanke escaped, and was murdered by Czechs partisans a few days later.

May 6

March
21

The army generals meanwhile distinguished themselves by apathy and negligence. The Americans discovered a bridge across the Rhine intact at Remagen and hurled their forces across it. On March 21 Goebbels found Hitler tired and dejected, aged by this fresh and unexpected catastrophe, and kept going only by 'iron will-power.' Morale everywhere in the west was collapsing. Food was running out. Deprived of sleep by the Allied bombers, the population was irritable and hysterical. When Goebbels mechanically mentioned Frederick the Great Hitler snapped that the Seven Years War was very different from this one. 'I can't get anywhere with him,' noted Goebbels, alarmed, 'even with my analogies from history.' Göring, said Hitler, revealing one cause of his aggravation, had just set off for Bavaria with two trainloads of entourage to visit his wife. Yet he again refused Goebbels' suggestion that the man must go. Goebbels dictated in impotent fury: 'What can I do? All I can do is unremittingly badger the Führer and put my criticisms to him.' Back home he found No. 20 Hermann-Göring Strasse in darkness: A power cable had been hit in the afternoon's Mosquito raid. Magda had left for Dresden to visit her women friends. He felt low and depressed. 'What should I do,' he pondered, 'to implement what I consider to be right?' He felt responsible to the nation, as one of the few people left with Hitler's ear.⁴²

Scene

In Dresden Magda visited Ello Quandt at the White Hart sanitarium. 'The new weapons will be our salvation,' she encouraged her sister-in-law, then guiltily checked herself: 'No, I'm talking nonsense. There's nothing else. Germany's defeat is only a matter of weeks.' Ello asked what she intended to do. 'We're all going to die, Ello,' she replied. 'But by our own hand, not the enemy's.' They had been the leaders of the Reich, she explained; they could not duck the responsibility now. 'We have failed.'⁴³

At the back of her husband's mind were the Russian newsreels of their heroic defense of Leningrad—of civilians collecting the bodies of their soldiers, tossing them into pits, and fighting on.⁴⁴ Berlin could and must be defended to the last man. He asked Hitler's permission to convert Berlin's main east-west highway to a landing strip—it would mean dismantling the ceremonial lamp standards and tree-felling in the Tiergarten on either side. Hitler grudgingly said, 'That's okay by me,' but disallowed

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the tree-felling later.⁴⁵ When all this was over, he reasoned, Berliners would still need trees. Goebbels called on the western city of Mönchengladbach to put up a special fight, but that town fell and the neighboring Rheydt, his home town, surrendered to the American in mid-March without a shot being fired.

As these and other grim reports flooded across Goebbels' desk, he wished he could close the window shutters and hide within those four walls for ever. And wrote that wish down in his diary.

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58: Death of Another Empress

So Dr Goebbels remained in Berlin, a prisoner of his own pride and his own routine from the moment he strapped on his leg-calipers each morning. In the west General Eisenhower's armies had swept across the Rhine and a pincer operation was about to shut off the Ruhr, the Nazis' last arsenal. The Rhinelanders had seemed almost to welcome the Allies: The civilians saw relief from the air raids, and from the threat of pestilence and starvation. The wording of Goebbels' diaries had become circumspect. 'In fact,' he dictated as April began, 'events in the west seem likely to give the enemy some hope of overwhelming us militarily quite soon.'¹ Lieutenant-Colonel Rudi Balzer brought back from the western front shocking reports of the collapse of morale which confirmed what Field Marshal Kesselring had said a few days earlier.² The city of Mannheim had telephoned the approaching Americans offering to surrender.³ Cologne surrendered in an hour. In Frankfurt German women were embracing the American troops. Townsfolk were openly hanging out the white flag and jeering at their own soldiers. Goebbels sent in thirty of his finest orators—he had no choice, because the printed media had virtually disappeared. In the south Hitler's last oil-producing fields in Hungary were about to be overrun. Dictating the diary each morning gave Goebbels little cheer. If only he could get Hitler to broadcast, as Churchill had in 1940 and Stalin in 1941, it would be like a battle won.

The scale of the air war was now such that when nine hundred American heavy bombers attacked Hanover and Berlin he dismissed it as a 'medium-scale' operation. His field office in Hamburg reported that people were commenting scornfully on the swift execution of the German officers who had allowed the Rhine bridge at Remagen to fall into American hands and suggesting quite openly—in letters to which they did not hesitate to append their full names and addresses—that the Reichsmarschall should face a firing squad as well.⁴

THE British and Americans had now crossed the Rhine in strength and had flooded into central Germany as far as Würzburg. Hitler suspected treason in the west, and sent for Goebbels at noon on March 27, 1945. For an hour they strolled through the chancellery garden beneath his study window, talking. Goebbels noticed how stooped the man had now become; and that the gardens had been torn up, as reinforcing work on

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DEATH OF ANOTHER EMPRESS 509

Hitler's subterranean bunker proceeded. Hitler had decided to stay in Berlin, and the mood of the generals around him was already one of despair. Goebbels remarked that they should have quit the Geneva Convention when he said: He blamed Speer and Bormann for talking Hitler out of it. They were still half-bourgeois, these men—'They think, but don't act, as revolutionaries.' Goebbels warned of the collapsing morale in the west, and urged Hitler to broadcast to the nation like Churchill and Stalin in their moment of crisis. Fifteen minutes would do the trick, he said.

scene

March 30

GOEBBELS saw Hitler again on March 30. A day or two before, he had asked Himmler's security service, the S.D., to scour its files for the old, forbidden horoscopes that had been cast for the birth date of the Republic, November 9, 1918, and the birth date of Hitler's Reich, January 30, 1933.⁷ The tracts were on his desk at the ministry on the twenty-ninth. 'Both are in startling agreement,' he furtively informed his diary. 'I can well understand,' he hastened to add, 'that the Führer has prohibited any trafficking in such unverifiable things. Even so it is not without interest to see that both the Republic's horoscope and that of the Führer are prophesying that our military affairs will look up in the latter part of April. In May, June, and July things will go downhill again but hostilities will cease, it seems, in mid-August. God grant,' he dictated cynically, 'that this be so.' Fearful lest these pages fall into the wrong hands he added: 'For myself such astrological prophecies are of no account. But I intend to exploit them . . . because in times of crisis people will clutch at the slightest straws.'⁸ Among these people he counted his Führer; but Hitler had slept for only two hours and was in no mood for horoscopes.

scene

Just six days ago, said Goebbels, producing his tattered copy of Carlyle, he had found himself reading the description of the most harrowing days of the Seven Years War. The great monarch had seen no way out of the imminent defeat; Frederick had set himself a final deadline, and wrote to the Count d'Argenson that if things did not look up by then he would swallow that phial of poison. Three days before that date, continued Goebbels, reading from the book, the Empress Elisabeth of Russia had suddenly died. Her half-witted successor Peter III had offered peace to Frederick, and the House of Brandenburg was saved. Why should they not hope for precisely the same kind of miracle now? Looking up, Goebbels saw tears flooding into Hitler's eyes.

¹ For some days Goebbels had pleaded with Hitler to broadcast a flaming oration to the Reich. But the Führer displayed what was to Goebbels an incomprehensible aversion to facing the microphone now.⁸ The S.D. had informed him after his New Year's speech that people felt that it had not said anything new, explained Hitler; now he wanted to wait for good news from the western front before broadcasting again. That might take some time. The news from there was devastating. The new Me262 jets, on which he had relied, were scoring notable successes but the mass desertions of his troops could not be ignored. They were, Goebbels

suggested, a consequence of Hitler's having rejected his drastic suggestion after the Dresden massacre that they repudiate the Geneva Convention and start executing Allied prisoners. Hitler agreed. Goebbels also criticized their efforts at starting guerrilla warfare. Admittedly, the collapse in the west had come with breathtaking speed, but their Operation Werewolf movement—an attempt to create an underground army of partisans—was a flop.⁹ So far only one man, the enemy-appointed mayor of Aachen, had been assassinated. Goebbels planned to take over 'Werewolf' himself, giving it a newspaper and a radio station, using all the tactics that he had developed in *Angriff* in the early Thirties. He even had a new 'Isidor' in his sights—he was planning the assassination of the newly installed 'Jewish police chief' of American-occupied Cologne as well as Heinrich Vogelsang, a 'former Nazi nincompoop' whom the Americans had appointed the mayor of Rheydt, his home town.¹⁰ The Americans immediately founded 'the first free newspaper' in Rheydt, just to spite Goebbels.¹¹ Worse, an American army lieutenant held a Passover ceremony for three hundred Jewish soldiers in his parental home in Dahlener Strasse—a Corporal Sidney Talmud of Brooklyn set up a camp stove on the family porch and made pancakes for three hours.¹² This really stuck in Goebbels' craw.

Even now, he complained, the war was still not being fought radically enough. The 'weaking' Otto Dietrich was wet-blanketing his every move. When Goebbels announced that the mayor of Aachen had been 'sentenced by a national tribunal' Dietrich killed the announcement by pointing out that it was untrue.

Hitler needed a Goebbels now, as defender of Berlin, more than a Dietrich. He told Goebbels that Dietrich was sacked.¹³ He had just dismissed General Guderian too—the mystery man of the Twentieth of July. Guderian, he said, had lost his nerve again, just as in the battle for Moscow.¹⁴ (This was a signal for Hitler to launch into well-worn reminiscences on how he, single-handed, had saved the entire army that winter of 1941-42 after his generals had thrown their armies into retreat.) The Führer brooded on the fiasco that Sepp Dietrich had just suffered with his Sixth S.S. Panzer Army in Hungary. He told Goebbels privately that he had come to accept that Himmler had no strategic talents after all. 'Punctilious, but no warlord,' was his assessment. The army's Ferdinand Schörner, whose army group was fighting magnificently in Czechoslovakia, was the only general that Hitler spoke well of—'one hell of a guy, the type you can blindly rely on,' he said, and Goebbels saw tears start into his eyes again.¹⁵

THEY parted, each invigorated by the other as so often before. Goebbels did not see his Führer again for two weeks. 'One sometimes has the impression,' he recorded on April 4, 1945, modifying his famous argument of 1943, 'that the struggling German nation is breaking out in a sweat at this, the direst moment of its crisis: And for the layman it is hard to tell whether this is the herald of recovery or the harbinger of death.'¹⁶

Acclue
April 4,
1945

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As the last V-2 rockets were launched at targets in Belgium, the S.S. newspaper *Das Schwarze Korps* adopted the infelicitous line that while Germany now had no hope of avoiding military defeat 'The Idea' must live on.¹⁷ Dr Goebbels inveighed against the 'too clever by half' intellectuals who had penned such defeatist drivel. He issued to the editors of surviving newspapers orders to underscore every act of old-fashioned valor that came to their attention, and print stories about Allied atrocities too—to prove that the British and Americans were no less barbarian than the bolsheviks.

He had persuaded Hitler to authorize the Luftwaffe's first (and last) major kamikaze operation on April 7, 1945.¹⁸ While the fighter-control radio wavelengths were swamped with female choirs singing the Horst Wessel anthem and voices urging the charioteers to die for Germany, over 180 Me109 fighter pilots took off that day pledged to ram the American bombers. Although seventy-seven pilots died in the clash over the Steinhuder Meer west of Hanover, only twenty-three bombers were destroyed. Goebbels expressed disappointment at this meager yield of so much individual bravery.¹⁹

The next day's leader article in *Das Reich* used radical language; even he found, reviewing the article, that he had 'somewhat abandoned' his previous 'moderation and reserve.' The one slender consolation that he offered was that one way or the other an end was indeed in sight. 'The hour that precedes the sunrise,' he reminded his readers, 'is always the darkest of the night. The stars that have cast their gentle glow have already subsided and the deepest darkness draws in the approaching dawn. None need fear that it will forget to come. The black veil of night will suddenly sink and the sun will soar into the blood-red firmament.' As it was in nature, he concluded, so it was in the lives of men and nations, particularly in war. 'We are confronted by bloodthirsty and vengeful foes who will put into effect all of their diabolical threats if once they get the chance. Let nobody deceive himself on that score. The one side will decimate the German people by bullets in the nape of the neck and by mass deportations, the other will *ausrotten* by terror and starvation.'²⁰

Hunger already stalked the streets. Learning that two hundred housewives had stormed two bakeries in the impoverished suburb of Rangsdorf, Goebbels had two of the ringleaders beheaded that night and ordered the fact announced by wall-poster and via the muted voice of Berlin's cable radio. He hoped to hear no more about mobs storming bakeries after that.²¹ He asked his driver if the Berliners would fight to defend their city. Rach answered bluntly, 'They see no point. For them the war's already lost.'²²

That weekend Magda came downtown from Schwanenwerder. 'A rather melancholy evening,' Goebbels noted, 'in which one piece of bad news after another came crashing in.' 'We often find ourselves desperately asking where it is all going to end,' he added. They talked over their own rapidly approaching end. Ribbentrop and Göring were both extending

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On the twelfth Goebbels paid his regular Thursday visit to the front, the Oder bridgehead at Küstrin, only a few miles from Berlin, his car loaded with cigarettes and cognac for the men. Like all populist statesmen it thrilled him to descend from the Olympian heights to the levels at which the ordinary man fought, lived, and died. He sat up smoking and drinking with General Busse's staff until midnight had long passed. Busse reassured him that his army would withstand the coming Soviet onslaught. 'We'll stand fast here until the Engländer kicks us up the ass,' he roared.²⁹

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April 13, 1944

DEATH OF ANOTHER EMPRESS 513

'If there is any justice in history,' Goebbels declaimed to the officers, 'a turning point must soon come—one like the miracle of the House of Brandenburg in the Seven Years War.'

'Who's the empress who's going to snuff it this time, then?' asked one of the colonels, in a tone just short of sarcasm.

The propaganda minister drove back to Berlin. An air raid was under way. From twenty-five miles away he could see the slow, lurid flashes as the blockbusters exploded, the glittering showers of marker flares and target indicators cascading out of the black, starless skies above—'The darkness before the dawn.' The streets were deserted as he drove up to No. 20 Hermann-Göring Strasse, but there was a knot of people waiting for him on the steps.

A babble of voices greeted him. Somebody thrust a Reuters bulletin into his hands: The American president Roosevelt had died at Warm Springs that afternoon.¹⁰

Goebbels clutched the slip of paper, his polished, receding forehead illuminated by the fires started by a shower of incendiaries on the Hotel Adlon—his gau headquarters now—and the Reich chancellery further down the street. His eyes glistened, though with Goebbels true tears only rarely came. 'Champagne!' he finally croaked. Was the Nazi sun not now about to soar into a new, blood-red firmament? 'Champagne! Bring out our finest champagne—and put me through to the Führer!'¹¹

'Mein Führer,' he shouted down the line. 'It is written in the stars that for us the second half of April will bring the turning point. This is Friday the Thirteenth. The turning point has come.'