

The Face of the Third Reich



Joachim C. Fest
1970

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Hannah Arendt rightly identifies this work as a major addition to the literature on the Third Reich. Joachim Fest writes powerfully and cynically of the character of those drawn to the inner circle of Adolph Hitler. Fest uncovers the social and political conditions which enabled the progressive seizure of power by a core of rootless men who formed around Hitler during the 1920s and 1930s. Fest describes how democratic institutions were undermined and overridden, how conservative elements within both government and industry were enlisted and used in this process, and how the German people were consciously manipulated in the push for total control.

Fest uses excerpts from Hitler's own speeches and writings to show the man's essential hatred of humanity. Hitler clearly knew the human and cultural costs of forcing his social and military agendas, yet deemed all abominations permissible in his pursuit of ultimate domination.

This work makes clear the pivotal role of propaganda and of control of the press in the manipulation of public opinion and the gaining of popular support by States of all persuasions. Fest reminds us how Goebbels created new models of event management and opponent demonisation that continue to thrive in the contemporary scene.

Fest opens the deeper context which supported a ruthless regime built upon blood from the start. He offers portraits of not only the major players in Hitler's inner circle, but looks at a number of lesser-known figures such as Reinhard Heydrich, who was given the commission of orchestrating the "Final Solution", Franz von Papen, who used his contacts in industry and the media to pump up Hitler's campaign, Joachim von Ribbentrop who charted new frontiers in diplomatic deception and duplicity, and Hans Frank who ensured the brutal execution of Hitler's rule in Poland.

Fest's portrayal of Albert Speer remains problematic. He appears at times to exonerate Speer of direct complicity in the brutality unleashed by his revered patron. Speer's last-minute turnaround appears to offer Fest permission to suggest that Speer was somehow different from his fellow inner-circle members. Regardless, one needs to ask whether Speer's obstruction of Hitler's "Gottdamerung" decree in 1945 was based more upon pragmatic than upon moral considerations.

The seizure of Germany's young people by their induction into the "Hitler Youth" organisations of the early 1930s is particularly instructive. This was clearly part of a grand plan to create a near-robotic infantry willing to unquestionably submit to the demands and implement the directives of their military rulers. As history has shown, Hitler largely succeeded in those objectives. In the present time, we continue to witness the utilisation of such methods in enabling such brutal events as Cambodia, Tienanmen Square, Lebanon in 1982, Kosovo, Chechnya and latterly Jenin and other towns in the West Bank. Collective subservience to the State - particularly to States controlled by totalitarian or megalomaniac governments - can feed into the enslavement of entire populations.

Joachim Fest has skillfully revealed many of the elements which together resulted in the gross perversion of essential human values wrought by the Third Reich in Germany. One is repeatedly confronted by the will to power, the will to

domination, the will to control destiny, the will to direct nature, the unearthly hubris, and the disregard for humanity permeating the lives of those who directed the activities of the Third Reich. Yet, in the end, Joachim Fest laments the irony of human memory: "Hitler is now forgotten. . . Even the traces of his rule now terrify only a few".

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PART ONE

ADOLF HITLER'S PATH FROM MEN'S HOSTEL TO REICH CHANCELLERY

The Incubation Period



The curiously fragmented, neurotic character of the post-1918 era brought about by the collapse of a traditional order, the difficulties of adapting to new forms of state, the loss of economic and social status by broad sections of the population, and, connected with this, the widespread fear of life, the exhaustion in the face of a time that was out of joint together with an increasing mass flight into irrationality, the mindless readiness to renounce reason, and an ever more uninhibited susceptibility to myth: all this could by itself have led to crisis and distress, but, without the person of Hitler, never to those extremes, reversals of established order, mass hysteria and barbaric explosions which actually resulted.

p 17

What we call National Socialism is inconceivable without his person. Any definition of this movement, this ideology, this phenomenon, which did not contain the name of Hitler would miss the point. In the story of the movement's rise, as in the period of its triumph down to its catastrophically delayed end, he was all in one: organizer of the party, creator of its ideology, tactician of its campaign for power, rhetorical mover of the masses, dominant focal point, operative centre, and, by virtue of the charisma which he alone possessed, the ultimate and underived authority: leader, saviour, redeemer. It was to him that the masses looked in their hunger for faith.

p 18

The pathological factors which Hitler the individual shared with the post-war society that brought him to the top may be observed from many different points of view. There was the overvaluation of the individual and of society that had met with such sudden disillusionment, the seething desires of restless millions and their inability to meet the demands of responsible and independent existence, the embittering experience of proletarianization that went hand in hand with a search for objects of blame and hate, the erroneous attitudes and maniac emotions which made any realistic approach to life impossible and created that distorted image of man in which both Hitler and his age saw themselves.

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Adolf Hitler wanted to be an artist. There is reason to suppose that his choice of the profession was determined not least by vague notions of the unfettered bohemian life in the mind of a provincial middle-class boy; it certainly sprang also from a wish to avoid the demands of a practical training. . . .

For a time he took piano lessons, until he grew tired of them and gave them up. He visited cafes, the theatre and the opera. It was the life half of a man of private means, half of a good-for-nothing, and he was able to lead it thanks to his mother's pension as a widow. He refused to take up any definite work, a 'bread-and-butter job,' as he contemptuously described it. Even at this time his great love was the music of Richard Wagner, which had an extraordinary power over him. p 22

Filled with faith in his special vocation, Hitler went in 1907, now in his nineteenth year, to Vienna to enroll in the painting class at the Academy of Fine Arts; but he failed the entrance examination and was rejected. . . .

He again tried and failed to enter the Academy of Fine Arts; after showing his work, he was not even allowed to take the examination. But he did not give up the aimless life to which he had mean-while become accustomed. Kubizek, who, as a music student, for a time shared with him the room at the back of the house at 29 Stumppergasse, has given a vivid description of this phase of Hitler's development. Even then Hitler used not to get up till midday; he would go for a stroll in Schonbrunn Park, then sit up late at night over grandiose and senseless projects in which practical incompetence fought with impatient self-inflation. p 23

By 1909 the savings left him by his parents had evidently all been used up, and, still incapable of leading a regular life, Hitler now began to go downhill. That summer he spent chiefly on park benches in the town; then he took refuge in a charity ward at Meidling. His subsequent claim to have worked as a labourer on building sites, which he even associated with his political awakening, has been proved false. p 24

Kubizek already noted with dismay the element of frenzy in his friend's makeup, the sudden unrestrained attacks of rage, the wild outbursts, the capacity for hatred. Hitler's growing lack of human contact, his inability to communicate, turned his conflicts inwards, where they renewed and intensified his aggressions. These in turn merely increased his isolation. Right up to the end, even when he was parading in triumph before hundreds of thousands of people, there remained a curious element of solitude in his life. pp 25-26

His feeling of superiority, which was necessary to him after he had failed in every personal challenge he had met, was founded not only on an arrogant contempt for mankind but also on the racial-biological twist, which, clearly following in the footsteps of Lanz von Liebenfels, he gave to his vulgarized Darwinian ideas. p 28

In his description of the 'anti-man' we come again and again upon unmistakable projections of Hitler's own character: the Jews' alleged obsession with revenge, their feelings of inferiority, their lust to subjugate and destroy, represent the transference on to his enemy of compulsive character traits which Hitler sensed within himself. p 29

This war promised an end to his loneliness, despondency and mistakes. At last he could flee from the misery of his aimless hate, his misunderstood and dammed-up emotions, his exaltations, into the security of a great community. For the first time in his life he had work to do, could feel solidarity with others, could identify himself with the strength and prestige of a powerful institution. For the first time Adolf Hitler, twenty-five years old, without a trade, for years the inmate of a men's hostel and a copier of postcards, knew where he belonged. The war was his second great formative experience, his positive one. He himself asserted with the telltale arrogance of the drop-out: "The war caused me to think deeply on all things human. Four years of war give a man more than thirty years at a university in the way of education in the problems of life."

p 32

He made no friends; he was the odd man out, the 'dreamer,' as they [his List Regiment comrades] reported almost unanimously. He often sat in a corner "with his helmet on his head, lost in thought, and none of us was able to coax him out of his apathy." He was certainly brave, was twice wounded, and was decorated with the Iron Cross First and Second Class. And yet he never rose above corporal. His then regimental adjutant has stated that all his superiors agreed that this doubtless courageous but extremely odd individual could not be made a sergeant. He would never command respect.

p 33

In the chaos of collapse, Germany assumed the shape of an enormously magnified men's hostel. Vast armies of people had been uprooted, threatened by the war or its economic and social aftermath. In the failure of a whole social order, the type of the failure had his chance of a fresh start. When society was thrown back to zero, those whose own lives were at zero had their historic opportunity.

This was Adolf Hitler's hour. The incubation period was over. In the brooding sullenness of the previous few years the fermenting elements - hatred, feverish fantasies, pathological delusions - had mysteriously settled. As Adolf Hitler puts it in the final chapter on the November Revolution: "I decided to become a politician."

p 34

The Drummer

In the seething beer cellars, heavy with smoke, the agitator who had now risen to be the party's 'recruiting chief' slowly talked his way upward; the record of a meeting in October 1920 states that there were almost five thousand listeners. It was probably at this time that Hitler decided to become a politician.

p 41

The party's name was changed; it was now called - on the basis of existing groups, but also in response to an as yet inarticulate, but widespread need - the National Socialist German Workers' Party (Nationalsozialistische Deutsche Arbeiterpartei: NSDAP). By the end of 1920 it numbered some three thousand members, and six months later the prolonged and bitter struggle for the leadership ended with total victory for Hitler. On 7 December 1921 the *Volkische Beobachter* for the first time called him the "leader of the NSDAP."

p 42

The poet Dietrich Eckart, who had joined Drexler's party before Hitler and had contacts with all the rightist circles, introduced him to Munich society, and the half curious, half repellent figure had its effect in the traditionally liberal stratum with its weakness for oddities. All accounts describe Hitler as awkward, fawningly polite, "noteworthy for his hasty greed when eating and his exaggerated bows." His lack of confidence remained for a long time, and his sometimes eccentric efforts to show off mirrored the irreparably disturbed relationship to polite society of the former occupant of the charity ward and inmate of the men's hostel. He is reported to have made a habit of arriving late and leaving early; loud, ostentatious outbursts against Jews or political opponents alternated abruptly with phases of introspective withdrawal.

pp 43-44

It was in Munich society that he made the acquaintance of a large proportion of his closest followers, among them Hermann Goring, the last commander of the Richthofen Fighter Squadron; the stiff, admiration-hungry Rudolf Hess, the Baltic German architect Alfred Rosenberg; and Max Erwin von Scheubner-Richter, who died on 9 November 1923, outside the Feldherrnhalle; all of these, and the many adherents of the second rank, were not workers, as the party's name implied, but representatives of an intellectual Bohemia, members of a middle class economically affected or mentally disorientated by the war.

pp 44-45

The country's growing misery helped his rise, and he was already a leading figure in Bavarian politics when, in 1923, Germany was overwhelmed by crises. In North Germany there was a quickly repressed military putsch; in the Rhineland the separatist movement gained fresh impetus; in the Rhur, France's narrow-minded policy provoked a struggle for that region; Saxony and Thuringia came increasingly under the influence of the radical left; and as the value of the mark plunged hunger riots broke out everywhere. A revolutionary situation had arisen, charged with the moods and expectations of civil war.

p 47

In the mistaken belief that Kahr was ready to strike, he [Hitler] attempted a dramatic coup on the evening of 8 November, seeking to place himself at the head of all anti-republican groups in the Bavarian capital. Brandishing a pistol, he burst into the midst of a gathering of dignitaries, leading politicians and picked citizens of the province, who had been invited by Kahr to the Burgerbraukeller. After firing a shot into the ceiling he announced the National Revolution, declared the Bavarian government deposed, and proclaimed a provisional Reich government under his own leadership. But the attempt failed. Hitler was torn between rage, despair and nervous breakdown. His sequence of hysterical moods foreshadowed the later convulsions and fits of frenzy of the defeated war leader and clearly demonstrated the failure of a basically unstable neurotic in a critical situation. . . .

On the following day (9 November) he placed himself, together with Ludendorff, at the head of a growing crowd that finally numbered several thousands. In the Odeonplatz, directly beside the Feldherrnhalle, there was an exchange of fire with a numerically weak police cordon. Hitler and the majority of his companions in the front rank fell or threw themselves to the ground; only Ludendorff, trembling with rage, walked on with heedless heroism and was arrested. Hitler then fled, leaving

behind a few thousand followers and sixteen dead. The legend, obviously put about later by himself, that he had carried a helpless child out of the firing line - he even produced the child in support of his statement - has been proved false. . . .

The course of the ensuing trial, which began on 25 February 1924, was determined by the tacit agreement of all those taking part not to “touch upon the ‘essence’ of those events,” so that the hearing was reduced to a farce in which Hitler unexpectedly ceased to be the accused and became the accuser. pp 48-49

The verdict of the Munich people’s Court, as has been aptly remarked, corresponded almost exactly to the heavenly verdict predicted by Hitler. The president of the court had the greatest difficulty in persuading the three lay judges to find him guilty at all. They agreed only on his assuring them that Hitler would unquestionably be granted an early pardon. The sentence, the preamble to which once more emphasized the accused’s “purely patriotic spirit and noblest intentions,” was the minimum punishment of five years’ imprisonment with the prospect of serving the term on probation after six months in prison. . . .After this Hitler showed himself to the cheering crowd from a window of the law courts. p 50

This failure [the failure of November 1923] was the starting point for a struggle for power in entirely new conditions and by new methods. Of decisive importance in this struggle was Hitler’s realization that force was not the way to capture the modern state apparatus, that power could be seized only on the basis of the Constitution itself. This certainly did not mean that he accepted the Constitution as a binding limitation on his future efforts; it meant that he resolved, and rigorously held to his decision throughout the rest of his struggle for power, regardless of dissensions within the party and revolts by the impatient, to steer towards illegality under the protection of legality. p 51

The unsuccessful putsch marked the end of Hitler’s political apprenticeship. The understanding of power that enabled him to rise during the following years was based on an ability to adapt to those in power, adroit handling of tactical compromises, and growing familiarity with the techniques of psychological domination and the principles of party organization. This last he increasingly directed towards his own person, elevating himself from the role of drummer to the pseudometaphysical concept of the ‘Führer.’ p 52

The Führer



The break forced on him by the failure of 9 November 1923 and his imprisonment at Landsberg helped Hitler to find himself - to find faith in himself and his mission. . . .

From now on he adopted the consciously distant, icy front which no smile, no casual gesture, no self-forgetful attitude ever breached. More and more he struck the rigid, statuesque and the style for his conception of greatness and leadership. A striking repetition of the dark past - he was to rise once more from anonymity by

winning over the masses and gaining the favour of those in power, before once again gambling everything on a single insane decision and losing everything, as in 1923.

p 53

His first concern, after his return from [imprisonment at] Landsberg on 20 December 1924, was the removal of the ban on the party. The quick success of his negotiations was partly due to the adroitness with which he worked his way back into the “front of the parties standing for law and order,” employing, according to circumstances, protestations of respect for legality, anti-Marxist, pro-Catholic, or monarchist attitudes.

pp 58-59

Against a background of wild cheering from the crowd of four thousand, who jumped on to the tables and embraced one another, a reconciliation took place between the warring members of the party. . . . Hitler was henceforth invariably known as ‘der Fuhrer.’ This success lent force to his decision to purge the party, which was refounded at this same meeting, of all the democratic relics of its early period and to give it the tightly authoritarian character of a party with a single leader - himself. Once more he demonstrated his gift for tactical maneuvering and the upshot was the elimination of his only two serious rivals. While the activities of Gregor Strasser were diverted to North Germany, the embittered Ernst Rohm found himself, without any explanation, expelled.

pp 59-60

He rapidly set up numerous offices and institutions which, in addition to their potential for keeping power within the party divided, also served to contest the competence and legality of the state institutions in the name of the true representatives of the supposedly unrepresented people. The departments of the shadow state came into being in parallel with the structure of ministerial government; for example the NSDAP had its own foreign, agricultural and defence offices. Provincial and district leaders increasingly laid claim to the status of ministers and local presidents; at public meetings the SA and SS took over police duties; and Hitler had himself represented at international conferences by his own ‘observers.’ Similar aims lay behind the party symbols: the swastika provided the shadow state's national emblem, the Horst Wessel Song its national anthem, while the brown shirt, orders and badges created a sense of solidarity in opposition to the existing state and rationalized the fondness for “decorations that were a profession of faith.”

p 61

He arrived at them [his methods] with an unwavering logic in which every detail was important and nothing left to chance: the size of the gathering, the precisely calculated composition of the crowd, the time of day, or the artificially delayed appearance of the speaker while tension was worked up by theatrically arranged processions of banners, military music, ecstatic shouts of ‘Heil!’ Suddenly, to the accompaniment of a blaze of light, he would emerge before a crowd systematically whipped up in its excitement to see him and primed for collective rapture. The “elimination of thought,” the “suggestive paralysis,” the creation of a “receptive state of fanatical devotion”: this culminating psychological state, the preparation of which Hitler had expressly described as the purpose of a mass meeting, had here become the aim of its stage-managing and the speech itself served no other purpose - the style, the arguments, the calculated climaxes, the modulation of the voice as well as the carefully practised threatening or imploring gestures. “The masses are like an animal that obeys

instincts,” he declared. In accordance with this principle, he prescribed the maximum primitiveness, simple catchphrases, constant repetition, the practice of attacking only one opponent at a time, as well as the dogmatic tone of the speeches, which deliberately refused to give “reasons” or to “refute other opinions.” All this amounted, as Hitler put it, to “a tactic based on the precise calculation of all human weaknesses, the results of which must lead almost mathematically to success.” p 64

On 30 January 1933 Hindenburg bestowed on him the Chancellorship, the key position for the acquisition of that power which, once in his possession, as he had publicly stated, he would never allow to be taken from him again, “so help me God.” “It all seems like a fairy story,” noted Goebbels in his diary. p 68

The Reich Chancellor

Hitler appeared on the political scene on 30 January 1933 with all the triumphal ceremonial of the historical victor. The grandiose setting with mass marches and torchlight processions was out of all proportion to the constitutional significance of the occasion, which technically speaking had merely brought a change of government. However, the public duly noted that the nomination of Hitler as Reich Chancellor was not like cabinet reshuffles in the past, but a new departure. p 70

Hitler left no doubt that this was his promised hour, the hour of his will and his power. Even the first signs of terrorism could not mute the jubilation but rather added to it. The brutal behaviour with which the regime celebrated its entry into office was widely seen as merely the expression of an energy that was striving to manifest itself as much on the governmental plane as in the street, and hence earned respect and even trust; for public feeling, perverted by a mood of depression, valued even brutal activity higher than the state's past inaction. Once again it was proved that in revolutionary times public opinion is easily won over and perfidy, calculation and fear carry the day. pp 70-71

The fast vanishing minority of those who did not succumb to the urge to embrace the new, which was spreading like an epidemic, found themselves isolated, hiding their bitterness, their lonely disgust, in the face of a defeat manifestly inflicted upon them “by history itself.” Violence for opponents, and for supporters the great experience of a new sense of solidarity - these were the most striking features of this phase. p 71

Hitler’s path to absolute power, which has since been variously imitated, remains in its several phases the classic model for the totalitarian capture of democratic institutions from within, that is to say with the assistance of, not in opposition to, the power of the state. Briefly, the technique consisted in the tactic of so linking the processes of revolutionary assault with legal actions that a screen of legality, dubious in individual cases and yet convincing as a whole, hid the illegality of the system from view. p 73

The public was confused not only by this brilliantly applied technique for concealing the facts but also by the breakneck speed at which, one after the other, opponents’ positions were captured, leaving them no time to gather and regroup their in any case

small and discouraged forces. Hitler later stated that it was his intention “to seize power swiftly and at one blow.” From the decree ‘for the protection of the German People’ of his first week as Chancellor, the action against the Land of Prussia taken a few days later, and the so-called Reichstag Fire Decree, which established a permanent state of emergency, through the Enabling Law to the unparalleled decree declaring the murders carried out in connection with the Rohm affair to have been legal - which concluded the process of seizing power - each step was a consequence of the one before, and created the factual, technical preconditions for the next.

pp 74-75

The state, over which he held absolute power, quickly took the shape of his own personality in countless respects: the naked dependence on power in relationships with people and things, coupled with a growing deterioration in all fields not connected with power; the boastful brutality of public manifestations of his will; the degradation of law; the theatrical and grandeur-seeking coldness which characterized all public announcements and all buildings representative of the state; the rigid constraint, followed from time to time by sudden discharges of energy; and finally the lack of relaxation and self-control. The special German form that all this took was not so much the expression of characteristics inherent in totalitarian systems as much as the faithful reflection of the mind of a psychopath in the institutions of state and society.

pp 80-81

He was determined to “compel the German people, who are hesitating before their destiny, to walk the road to greatness.” Peace, which in September 1938 had once more been preserved, a year later had no chance left. For in the meantime the world felt itself challenged to the limit by the so-called Crystal Night (on which windows of Jewish shops were smashed throughout Germany) and the swallowing up of Czechoslovakia, by the spectacle of Hitler’s tearing up the Munich Agreement before the ink was dry. As though intoxicated, alternately pursuing his actions and being dragged along by them, seeking refuge in rhetorical delirium before the masses and with his judgement clouded by emotional exaltation, Hitler diligently arranged the preconditions for the catastrophe. “Our opponents are little worms,” he scoffed. “I saw them in Munich.” And he refused to believe they would take risks. When, at the end of August 1939, Goring tried to halt his insane behaviour and asked him to abandon his desperate gamble, Hitler replied excitedly that he had gambled desperately all his life.

p 86

Years before he had said in one of his bloody and misanthropic prophecies to Hermann Rauschning:

"We must be prepared for the hardest struggle that a nation has ever had to face. Only through this test of endurance can we become ripe for the dominion to which we are called. It will be my duty to carry on this war regardless of losses. The sacrifice of lives will be immense. We all of us know what world war means. As a people we shall be forged to the hardness of steel. All that is weakly will fall away from us. But the forged central block will last forever. I have no fear of annihilation. We shall have to abandon much that is dear to us and today seems irreplaceable. Cities will become heaps of ruins; noble monuments of architecture will disappear forever. This time our sacred soil will not be spared. But I am not afraid of this."

In these few sentences lies the epitaph of almost fifty million people. p 87

Victor and Vanquished



Torn this way and that between choleric elation and exhaustion, Hitler lashed out savagely in all directions, threw his armies over ever new frontiers, ceaselessly conquering fresh territories, none of which was large enough to satisfy his egomania. Anyone probing the root cause of the war and the manner of waging it is continually led back to considerations of Hitler's character; for, much as the war looks like a predatory excursion necessitated by the Third Reich's ruinous economic policy, great as was the influence of outdated nationalist, ideological or missionary motives, it was the purely hegemonic aims that overlay all others. The urge to dominate Europe, and ultimately the world, although backed by ideological and racial arguments, was at bottom nothing more nor less than the desire to exercise sovereignty. "The question," Hitler himself once laconically put it, "is not the fate of National Socialist Germany, but who is to dominate Europe in the future." pp 89-90

Once it had been discovered, the recipe for success remained almost unvaried, based chiefly on the advance of massed tanks straight through the enemy lines, followed by a pincer movement and encirclement. The German superiority lay less in a preponderance of men or materials than in unswerving application of the principle of the rapid mobile operation which, combined with sudden air attacks and commando and paratroop assaults behind the front, had the effect not so much of 'defeating' the enemy in the classical sense as of so confusing him that he became incapable of fighting and ready to capitulate. pp 90-91

"The idea of treating wars as anything other than the harshest means of settling questions of very existence," he once said, "is ridiculous. Every war costs blood, and the smell of blood arouses in man all the instincts which have lain within us since the beginning of the world: deeds of violence, the intoxication of murder, and many other things. Everything else is empty babble. A humane war exists only in bloodless brains." In such maxims the primitive fascination of a consciousness stuck fast in its own formative period survives in crude analogies of the right of the stronger. Their effect was to ensure approval in the highest quarters for the policy of suppression now being practised with increasing savagery. They also lent support to demands for the ruthless use of the German forces themselves. When the loss of young officers was pointed out to Hitler, he replied uncomprehendingly, "But that's what the young men are for!" pp 95-96

While his foes, who since the active intervention of the United States had over 75 per cent of the world's manpower, industrial capacity and sources of raw materials at their disposal, overran the outer bastions of his empire - North Africa, Sicily and the Ukraine - gained mastery of the air, and forced the collapse of the German U-boat

campaign, Hitler buried himself in the solitude of his headquarters. There in almost manic impersonality, with security zones, barbed-wire and lines of outposts which on both Jodl and Goebbels produced the impression of a concentration camp, an embittered man, visibly deteriorating physically and in his own words tortured by melancholy, ever more deeply entangled in the hatreds and complexes of his early years, organized between attacks of compulsive screaming and pathological rage the continued prosecution of the war and the frenzied murder of whole peoples.

pp 96-97

Soon after the unsuccessful Ardennes offensive, which had come to grief in a thousand incompetencies, Hitler returned to Berlin, to the bunker under the Reich Chancellery. Here, protected by twenty-six feet of concrete as much from reality as from enemy bombs, to the accompaniment of attacks of rage, senseless orders to attack, and convulsive weeping, he once more constructed his world of delusions, which included miracle weapons, ultimate victory, and great buildings to go up after the war. His body ruined by drugs, at the mercy of the storms of his temperament, and tortured by distrust, he looked by all accounts like a figure from the kingdom of the shades. He gestured wildly over maps, planned attacks, directed with a trembling hand armies that no longer existed, and as an encirclement began described to his entourage the joy of the battle before the gates of Berlin which was going to decide the war. During the night-long brooding monologues, which reflected both the final stage of his intellectual decay and his bitterness at the “cowardly failure” of the German people, he spoke “almost exclusively of the training of dogs, questions of diet, and the stupidity and wickedness of the world.” Almost daily he took counsel from the horoscopes of an astrologer, and while attacking Russian armies were already clashing with the hastily assembled remnants of the shattered German forces, fantastic hopes flickered again from the conjunction of planets, ascendants and transits in the square. Only when the ring had closed around the government district, and he ruled over nothing but a few million cubic yards of rubble, did he begin to give in.

p 100

On the night of 29 April, after he had begun the process of ending his existence with a scene of macabre pedantry and married his companion of many years, Eva Braun, he dictated his political testament. It contained protestations of his own innocence, accusations of foreign treachery and of undeserved disloyalty, and in its repetition of the old formulas demonstrated his lifelong inability to learn. He had never outgrown his first prejudices, hatreds and complexes, and remained to the end fixed in a monotonous sameness of thought and feeling. . . .

The following afternoon, with Russian troops only a few blocks from the Reich Chancellery, Hitler prepared to take his life. “He sat there,” an orderly officer wrote later, “apathetic and distractedly brooding, indifferent to everything going on around him, tormented, lifeless, a man dying slowly and with difficulty who was bound indissolubly to his destiny and was now being strangled by it. Then I knew that this was the end!” Shortly after 3 p.m. he retired with Eva Braun to his private rooms. . . .

A single shot rang out. The commander of the SS guard, Rattenhuber, who had been waiting with a few others in the corridor, went in and found Hitler lying on the sofa, which was soaked in blood. Beside him lay Eva Braun, an unused revolver in her lap; she had taken poison. Rattenhuber had the two bodies taken into the garden, and

petrol poured over them, then sent for the mourners: Goebbels, Bormann, General Burgdorf, Hitler's valet Linge, and a few others. A burst of Russian firing drove them back into the bunker, and one of those present threw a burning rag on the bodies. As the flames shot up they all stood to attention with hands raised in the Nazi salute. A member of the guard who passed the spot half an hour after the ceremony couldn't recognize Hitler because he was already pretty burnt. pp 101-102

Only respect for the dead and the ruins he left behind forbid us to dismiss this life as no more than a nauseating, vulgar and bloody horror story, which fundamentally is all it amounts to; not without justice the epoch of his rise and power has been called "the age of the demonic nonentities." The historian who studies this figure is continually up against the difficulty "of making the catastrophic magnitude of the events tally with the inconceivable commonplaceness of the individual who set them in motion." p 103

PART TWO

PRACTITIONERS AND TECHNICIANS OF TOTALITARIAN RULE

HERMANN GORING: NUMBER TWO



The top leadership of the party can be divided into two types according to the way they came to adopt a self-sufficient, completely unideological dynamic: those who were born National Socialists and those who became National Socialists. Joseph Goebbels was the prototype of the latter. . . .

In contrast to this type there were the 'born' National Socialists, men with a spontaneous urge to prove themselves in struggle, and an unreflecting, elemental hunger for power. Such men had never had any theoretical conceptions to give up. They were 'fighters' and in most cases marked by their experiences at the front during the war, modern mercenaries who would change flags and views for an appropriate 'reward.' For them there was now an opportunity extending beyond the war and the chaos of the collapse to use their military talents in civilian life, coupled with the promise of power. Ambitious, straightforward and ruthless, they did not suffer at the hands of the world like the ideological type, but wanted to possess or enjoy it. They did not, like the ideologist, think of future generations, but at best of the next day, or even the next hour. Their prototype was Hermann Goering; a contemporary called him "the great representative of the national Socialist movement." He said himself, "I joined the party because I was a revolutionary, not because of any ideological nonsense."

pp 114-115

Hermann Goring was true to type. What governed him from the beginning and led him to follow Hitler was simply his absolute will to power. He made his name and acquired his status because he knew how to fight resolutely for power as almost no one else did, and he almost lost them both because he enjoyed them as almost no one else did: shamelessly, naively and greedily, always in too large draughts. Pompous and on the verge of ridiculous, he was a mixture of *condottiere* and sybarite. He was as vain, cunning and brutal as any other follower of Hitler, and yet he was more popular than any of them and for a time actually more popular than Hitler himself.

p 115

By the end of the war in 1918 he was commander of the Richthofen Fighter Squadron, which was rich in tradition. He combined the romantic aura of the much-decorated fighter pilot with the rough unaffected intimacy of the boon companion, at one and the same time hero and hail-fellow-well-met. And although as an orator he lacked both propagandist subtlety and a feeling for the undefined emotions at work in a mass audience, he nevertheless knew how to take a crowd as it wants to be taken: roughly, humorously, without beating about the bush. His aristocratic background, which he emphasized with the deliberate intention of setting himself apart from the rest of Hitler's followers, spared him any feelings of inferiority, the feelings of petty bourgeois who had come down in the world which were so characteristic of the men who later became the leaders of the National Socialist Party.

pp 116-117

The backbone of his personality gradually disintegrated under Hitler's influence and he lapsed into undignified subservience. This, to begin with, he celebrated in wildly emotional terms. "I have no conscience! Adolf Hitler is my conscience!" he once exclaimed. On another occasion he said:

"If the Catholic Christian is convinced that the Pope is infallible in all religious and ethical matters, so we National Socialists declare with the same ardent conviction that for us too the Fuhrer is absolutely infallible in all political and other matters. It is a blessing for Germany that in Hitler the rare union has taken place between the most acute logical thinker and truly profound philosopher and the iron man of action, tenacious to the limit. [And again] I follow no leadership but that of Adolf Hitler and of God!"

p 118

Goring's energy was also responsible for certain important interim successes on the way to power. Hitler's reward for the "movement's diplomatist" was a seat in the cabinet and the portfolio of Prussian Minister of the Interior. While outwardly Goring continued to use his stout joviality to increase his popularity, he showed from day to day the most brutal energy in seizing power, blustering, terrorizing, crushing opposition, and creating order in accordance with his own ideas. His was the task of ruthlessly applying force, and hence that part in the National Socialist revolution which was concealed, with a profusion of words and gestures, behind bustling pseudo-legality and Hitler's protestations that this was "the most bloodless revolution in world history."

p 120

Wherever his moderating influence might have been executed, Goring failed and increasingly left the field to the more radical Goebbels. He proved his aggressive brutality once again when, at the conclusion of the seizure of power, he appeared as

an ambitious principal in the Rohm affair. Together with Heirich Himmler he took control of the murders in North Germany and Berlin and, on his own admission, expanded the “circle of duties” entrusted to him in order, as he thought, finally to ensure for himself that position as Second Man blocked for so long by Rohm. There is a revealing story that shows the sort of reputation he had at that time. It happened shortly after 30 June 1934. Goring arrived late for dinner with the British Ambassador, Sir Eric Phipps, explaining that he had only just got back from shooting. Sir Eric replied: “Animals, I hope.”

p 122

One of the “giants of jurisdiction” of the Third Reich, he performed or assumed in the first two years alone the duties of President of the Reichstag as well as of Reich Minister for Aviation; he was Prussian Minister of the Interior, head of the Gestapo, President of the Prussian State Council, Reich Forestry Commissioner and Controller of the Hunt, Commander in Chief of the Luftwaffe and Commissioner for the Four-Year Plan. Yet in each of these positions, which formally gave him enormous power, he was soon interested only in the decorative side. After a few fitful efforts at the beginning he generally left his duties to their own devices, with the result that there was “paralysing disorder.” What had been intended as a concentration of forces turned out the exact opposite, and his hunger for office began to look like nothing more than an eccentric extension of his mania for collecting. He yielded himself ever more extravagantly to the enjoyment of power, which he understood mainly as a source of wealth; he organized feasts, state hunts and birthday celebrations of almost oriental splendour. . . .



His first press officer at the Prussian Ministry of the Interior has recalled that Goring quickly began to hate the irksome routine of the ministry and rarely turned up there. A biography published in 1938 by one of his closest colleagues nonchalantly lists the tailor, barber, art dealer and jeweller (in that order) as Goring’s first visitors in the morning of a working day. With a love of luxury like that of some voluptuous courtesan, he was always changing his suits and uniforms - as often as five times in a day.

pp 122-123

What he was looking for now was not power but theatrical effect. As a result the areas of his influence were eroded away: the Prussian position, control of the police, and later also the authority which he tried to build up for himself over the economy and the Wehrmacht. In comparison with Hitler, his well-fed joviality did have the advantage of drawing attention away from the gloomy and neurasthenic obsessiveness of his partner in the leadership, and his popularity, which was at its peak shortly before the war, owed much to his weaknesses, behind which people imagined they could sense human warmth. In a last acknowledgement of this popularity, which no longer represented his real influence, Hitler appointed him on 1 September 1939 his first successor and later President of the Reich Defence Council as well as Reich Marshal.

pp 124-125

By the end of 1942 he found himself in a position of complete isolation and had lost to the steadily advancing Bormann such territory as had been left to him by his rivals Goebbels, Himmler and Speer. pp 125-126

When General Galland informed him in 1943 that enemy fighters were accompanying the bomber squadrons further and further into German territory, Goring forbade him to report the matter. He rarely took any part now in strategic or other conferences and was often sought in vain when his chief of staff required instructions. Instead he devoted himself as before to his pastimes and private passions. The Essen Gauleiter Terboven tells of a visit to Karinhall: "It was Sunday and the sky over Germany was once more black with American bombers." Goring merely made sure from his duty adjutant that there was no air-raid warning in force for Karinhall and then remarked, "Fine, let's go hunting." p 126



In the final phase of his life he suffered from profound illusion. In April 1945 he had been dismissed with ignominy from all his posts, arrested, and bequeathed a curse. But when he heard of Hitler's death, he was, his wife recalled, "close to despair" and exclaimed, "He's dead, Emmy. Now I shall never be able to tell him that I was true to him till the end!" In much the same way as Himmler, he hoped to be accepted by the Allies as a partner in negotiations. As General Bodenschatz has testified, soon after his capture by the Americans his main concern was the proclamation which he intended to make to the German people as soon as he had reached a satisfactory agreement with Eisenhower.

His claim to the leadership of the Reich after Hitler's death was indisputable in his view. p 128

All his utterances in the Nuremberg cell were pervaded, in a final act of illusory self over-evaluation, by the idea that he would one day be celebrated as a martyr. He was glad he had been condemned to death, he stated shortly before the end, because the man condemned to life imprisonment had no chance of becoming a martyr. "In fifty or sixty years there will be statues of Hermann Goering all over Germany," he remarked, and added, "Little statues maybe, but one in every German home." p 129

JOSEPH GOEBBELS: 'MAN THE BEAST'



The majority of the ideological elements absorbed into National Socialism were nothing but material, assessed at varying degrees of effectiveness, for a ceaseless pyrotechnical display of propagandist agitation. Flags, *Sieg Heils*, fanfares, marching columns, banners and domes of searchlights - the whole arsenal of stimulants, developed with inventive ingenuity, for exciting public ecstasy was ultimately intended to bring about the individual's self-annulment, a permanent state of mindlessness,

with the aim of rendering first the party adherents and later a whole nation totally amenable to the leaders' claim to power. . . .

This flight into the irrational, into regions where politics became a matter of faith, of *Weltanschauung*, answered a vehement need of the disoriented masses; nevertheless, there was a purposeful Machiavellian guidance behind the direction and forms it took, so that on closer inspection the apparently elemental demand proves to be the planned and repeatedly reawakened irrationalism to which the modern totalitarian social religions owe their support and their existence.

Joseph Goebbels was the brain behind this manipulation of minds, “the only really interesting man in the Third Reich besides Hitler.” One of the most astonishingly gifted propagandists of modern times, he stood head and shoulders above the bizarre mediocrity of the rest of the regime’s top-ranking functionaries. pp 130-131

Goebbels described his feelings for the Fuhrer as “holy and untouchable.” He stated after a speech by Hitler that he had spoken “profoundly and mystically, almost like a gospel,” and affirmed in a protestation of loyalty: “An hour may come when the mob rages around and roars, ‘Crucify him!’ Then we shall stand as firm as iron and shout and sing ‘Hosanna!’” In one of his regular birthday addresses on the eve of 20 April, Goebbels declared, “When the Fuhrer speaks it is like a divine service.” p 132



That the son of a strictly Catholic working-class family from Rheydt in the Rhineland should have found his ostensible certitude of faith, after years of agonizing indecision, in the National Socialist movement is a stroke of historical irony. Highly gifted, he was subjected from an early age to a tormenting feeling of physical inadequacy; he had a weak constitution and a crippled foot. When he appeared in Geneva in 1933 as representative of the Reich, a caricature in a Swiss newspaper showed a crippled little man with black hair. Under it was written: “Who is that? Oh, that's the representative of the tall, healthy, fair-haired, and blue-eyed Nordic race!”

pp 134-135

He found Hitler’s talk on Bolshevism, foreign policy, redemption of the rights and holdings of the princes and private property ‘terrible’ and spoke of “one of the greatest disappointments of my life”; but when Hitler publicly embraced him shortly after a speech, Goebbels called him in gratitude ‘a genius’ and noted emotionally in his diary: “Adolf Hitler, I love you.” Six months earlier he had asked himself who this man really was. “Christ or St John?” Now, notably under the influence of a generous invitation to Munich and Berchtesgarden, his last doubts vanished, while simultaneously his ambition recognized the outlines of the role he might play. If Hitler was really ‘Christ,’ then he wanted to be the one to take the part of the prophet; for “the greater and more towering I make God, the greater and more towering I make myself.” In this sense it really was apt when he wrote that the days in Munich with Hitler had shown him his ‘direction and path’: the organizer of the Fuhrer myth had found his mission. During his stay, he wrote in his diary:

“The chief talks about race problems. It is impossible to reproduce what he said. It must be experienced. He is a genius. The natural, creative instrument of a fate determined by God. I am deeply moved. He is like a child: kind, good, merciful. Like a cat: cunning, clever, agile. Like a lion: roaring and gigantic. A fellow, a man. He talks about the state. In the afternoon about winning over the state and the political revolution. It sounds like prophecy. Up in the skies a white cloud takes on the shape of the swastika. There is a blinking light that cannot be a star. A sign of fate?”

From this point on he submitted himself, his whole existence, to his attachment to the person of the ‘Führer,’ consciously eliminating all inhibitions springing from intellect, free will and self-respect. pp 139-140



“To unleash volcanic passions, outbreaks of rage, to use masses of people on the march, to organize hatred and despair with ice-cold calculation”: this was how he [Goebbels] saw his self-imposed task. And he succeeded. With diabolical flair, continually thinking up new tricks, he drove his listeners into ecstasy, made them stand up, sing songs, raise their arms, repeat oaths - and he did it, not through the passionate inspiration of the moment, but as the result of sober psychological calculation at the desk. Once he had got the reaction he wanted he stood there, small but erect, generally with one hand on his hip, above the tumult, coolly assessing the effect of his stage management. In truth, the ‘little doctor’ with the tormenting feeling of physical inadequacy was capable of bending the masses to his will and making them available for any purpose; he could, as he boasted, play upon the national psyche ‘as on a piano.’ p 143

Immediately after 30 January 1933 he boasted that his propaganda had not only operated directly by winning over millions of supporters; equally important was its effect in paralysing opponents. Many had become so tired, so fearful, so inwardly despairing as a result of his onslaughts that in the end they regarded Hitler’s Chancellorship as fated. His reward came in the middle of March 1933 when Hitler openly broke the coalition agreement to bestow upon him the long-planned Ministry for National Enlightenment and Propaganda. On taking office Goebbels cheerfully announced that “the government intends no longer to leave the people to their own devices.” It was the task of the new ministry “to establish political coordination between people and government.” . . .

The very essence of totalitarian government always lies in the combination of propaganda and terrorism. It is these two together that alone make possible that thoroughgoing psychological and social organization of man which reduces the scope of individual freedom to the point of immobility.

p 144

Everything seems to indicate that in Goebbels’s anti-Semitism, over and above individual motives, we must see an example of that dialectic common to all totalitarian propaganda: the need for a barbarically exaggerated image of the opponent. This helps to harness the aggressions within a society while attaching the latent positive energies to emotional idealizations of its own leader figures. Only in this way could propaganda regain that vehemence which had once brought it such

success, even if there was always an obvious element of strained artificiality about the demonized figure of the Jew as presented by Goebbels with ever more breathless efforts. All his attempts to paint the universal enemy as a wirepuller at work from Moscow to Wall Street were shattered by the reality of the frightened and harassed human beings wearing the yellow star, who for a time wandered the streets of German cities before suddenly vanishing forever.

p 146

The astonishing effect of his ideas once more confirmed Hitler's assertion "that by the clever and continuous use of propaganda a people can even be made to mistake heaven for hell, and vice versa, the most miserable life for Paradise." Preoccupied as he was with propaganda, it was, as one of his colleagues confirmed, "almost a happy day" for him when famous buildings were destroyed in an air raid, because at such times he put into his appeals that ecstatic hatred which aroused the fanaticism of the tiring workers and spurred them to fresh efforts.

pp 147-148

Unhesitatingly he accepted Hitler's end as his own. Unlike the former comrades in arms who ignominiously fled - Ley, Ribbentrop, Streicher - but also without the naive self-deception of Goring or Himmler, he had no illusions as to how intensely they had provoked the world. "As for us," he wrote in *Das Reich* of 14 November 1943, "we have burnt our bridges. We cannot go back, but neither do we want to go back. We are forced to extremes and therefore resolved to proceed to extremes." And later: "We shall go down in history as the greatest statesmen of all time, or as the greatest criminals." He was level-headed enough to accept responsibility for the final verdict. .

His remarks in his farewell conversation with Hans Fritzsche, in which, following Hitler's example, he ascribed the collapse to the failure of the German people, and at the same time the way he strove to intensify the process of destruction, were like a final seal set upon his contempt for humanity. "When we depart, let the earth tremble!" were the last words with which, on 21 April 1945, he dismissed his associates. What he seemed to fear more than anything else was a death devoid of dramatic effects; to the end, he was what he had always been: the propagandist for himself. Whatever he thought or did was always based solely on this one agonising wish for self-exultation, and this same object was served by the murder of his children, on the evening of 1 May 1945. They were the last victims of an egomania extending beyond the grave. However, this deed too failed to make him the figure of tragic destiny he had hoped to become; it merely gave his end a touch of repulsive irony. A few hours later he died, together with his wife, in the gardens of the Reich Chancellery.

pp 150-151

REINHARD HEYDRICH: THE SUCCESSOR



He was a man like a whiplash. In his Luciferian coldness, amorality and insatiable greed for power he was comparable only to the great criminals of the Renaissance, with whom he shared a conscious awareness of the omnipotence of man. In his case this took the form of the conviction that by the methodical application of technology and organization

everything was possible: the construction of a government, the establishment of an empire, the re-creation of a race, the purification of blood over wide areas. And he intended these means to be directed to one simple end: power. . . .

He seemed the epitome not merely of National Socialist totalitarianism but of modern totalitarianism as a whole; and if he left the world a legacy before he had come fully into his own, it was that he taught man to fear man more comprehensively than ever before. The traditional idea of evil, which is linked with the concept of possession by spirits, uncontrollable outbursts of emotion, and an attachment to the dark instincts, breaks down before the transparent sobriety of this type. So does the concept of the demonic, which has metaphysical overtones inappropriate to the unwaveringly realistic conception of power of this totally secularized phenomenon. pp 152-153

Heydrich was tall, blond, athletic, and combined high intelligence with a metallic streak in his nature which was regarded as the proof of a special racial grace. "A young, evil god of death," as Carl Jacob Burckhardt said after meeting him, he was sometimes called by his subordinates, with a mixture of fear and admiration, "the Blond Beast," while *Das Schwarze Korps* wrote of him: "Even in his outward appearance he was an SS man as the people picture him, a man all of one piece." p 155

The coldness and contempt with which he viewed human beings and human life may give us a hint of the way in which, during hours of solitary self-confrontation, he treated himself. Only alcohol and the pleasures of night life enjoyed with forced intemperance - outings on which he ordered his subordinates by turn to accompany him - could bring him brief respite from a life in which he was constantly being tested to breaking-point. . . .

One of his colleagues has described the haunting and profoundly revealing occasion when Heydrich came home at night to his brilliantly lit apartment and suddenly saw his reflection in a large wall mirror. In an attack of cold rage he "whipped his pistol from his holster and fired two shots at this double," the ever and tormentingly present negation of himself, from which he could free himself in liquor and in the splintered glass, but not in reality. He was the prisoner of this figure of negation, he lived in a world populated by the self-created chimeras of a hostile distrust, scented behind everything treachery, intrigue or the snares of hidden enmity, and thought only in terms of dependence - the most impressive embodiment of that vulgarized Darwinist principle in whose light the world was revealed to National Socialist ideology: life seen exclusively as struggle. Himmler said of him that he was "the embodiment of distrust - the 'hypersuspicious,' as people called him - nobody could endure it for long." p 158

As no one else among his colleagues and rivals, he was a master of indirect methods of gaining influence, of bringing about the almost imperceptible shifting of power which only became visible at the moment of the rival's downfall. With the exception of Bormann, who thanks to his personal position of trust with Hitler felt unassailable, everyone feared him, however high above him they might stand in the official hierarchy, and they watched his apparently inexorable rise with a mixture of fascination and impotence, like an approaching doom. p 159

Heydrich clearly saw that in a modern totalitarian system of government there is no limit to the principle of state security, so that anyone in charge of it is bound to acquire almost unrestricted power. Within a year, always in agreement with Himmler, he gained control first of the Munich police, then of the Bavarian, and in turn of each of the political police of the German *Lunder*. The last was Prussia, whose chief, Rudolf Diels, was astute enough and had enough friends in high places to resist until 20 April 1934; then he and Goring had to yield. Heydrich himself became head of the Secret Police (Gestapo) as well as of the SD, and in 1936, when Himmler became Chief of the German Police, Heydrich was also given control of the Criminal Police. He was then, at thirty-two, one of the most powerful men in the country. p 161

After Heydrich had given such an impressive demonstration of his cunning and adroitness in the elimination of Rohm and the destruction of the power of the SA, he became almost indispensable wherever any dirty business had to be arranged. He had a hand in the Tukhachevsky affair, which led to the liquidation of the top military leaders of the Soviet Union, and in the dismissal of the traditionalist Army leaders Blomberg and Fritsch following fabricated scandalous 'revelations.' His work behind the scenes helped to prepare the way for the Austrian *Anschluss* and the piecemeal incorporation of Czechoslovakia. In some way that is still obscure he was behind the attempt on Hitler's life in the Munich Burgerbrau; he organized the nation-wide anti-Semitic demonstration that came to be known as the 'Crystal Night,' conceived and staged the 'attack' on the German radio station at Gleiwitz which was to provide a pretext for declaring war on Poland, and finally was the initiator of Project Bernhard, the attempt to undermine the British currency by means of forged Bank of England notes. p 163

He probably received with somewhat divided feelings the order for the so-called Final Solution of the Jewish Problem, which was given to him on 24 January 1939 (and, with the further order to supervise the "zone of German influence in Europe," again on 31 July 1941). True, he never shrank from any task, and to this he immediately devoted himself with that tendency to perfectionist, large-scale solutions and the apocalyptic thoroughness typical of the organizational thinking of National Socialist officialdom. But cunning was more in his line than brutality, and for an opponent to step unsuspectingly into an artistically constructed trap gave him a satisfaction he never derived from any aggressively brutal act. . . .

These scruples found no outward expression, however, and with an inflexibility that gave no hint of inner conflict, Heydrich set about seizing and herding together the Jews of Europe and sending them to their death, partly by 'natural reduction,' that is to say by hunger, exhaustion, or disease, and partly by physical destruction, either with the aid of murder squads or by the so-called 'special treatment' of mass gassing. He conceived the overall plan which, over and above extermination of the Jewish race, was to make vast areas of the East available as 'experimental fields' for eugenic breeding. p 164

The attack which cost him his life was planned and prepared by Czechoslovak exiles in London, who had noted the success of Heydrich's pacification measures with growing disquiet; not the least of their purposes in ordering the assassination was to

provoke the regime into taking such brutal counter-measures that a more widespread resistance would be sparked off. The three young men who waited for Heydrich's car near the city boundary on 27 May 1942 had been dropped by parachute shortly before not far from Prague. As the car slowed down to take a sharp bend one of them, Jan Kubis, threw a bomb which exploded under the vehicle. Heydrich was seriously wounded. He managed to jump out of the car and fire a few shots at his fleeing assailants, but then collapsed. Doctors were sent by Hitler and Himmler, but he died a week later.

p 167

In the punitive measures that followed no fewer than 936 people were condemned to death by court-martial at Prague and 395 at Brno. Although no connection was established between them and the assassination, all the inhabitants of the village of Lidice were sacrificed to the manes of Reinhard Heydrich. And as if to make the terror emanating from his name live after his death, the circumstances of his death provided the final impetus for the experiments with sulphonamides on human beings at Ravensbruck concentration camp. Operation Reinhard, by which the property of murdered Jews was sequestered, was named after him.

p 168

Heydrich was far more than a leading henchman of Hitler remarkable for intelligence and extremism. He was a symbol and perhaps *the* representative figure of the Third Reich at the peak of its internal and external power. In this sense it was entirely apt when in the inner circle he was spoken of as Hitler's successor, who "sooner or later" would have become Germany's 'Führer.' He had already entered into this succession in the background through his place in the growing SS state which was mercilessly asserting itself.

p 168

HEINRICH HIMMLER: PETTY BOURGEOIS AND GRAND INQUISITOR



Widely identified with the SS state and the extermination factories, Heinrich Himmler seems like the civilized, or at least contemporary, reincarnation of a mythical monster. The feeling of menace, of omnipresent yet intangible terror, which once emanated from him has become attached to his name and to his personality, which is all the more sinister for its lack of personal colour. Even in his lifetime there was a Himmler 'myth,' which distorted the features of the Reichsführer of the SS in a way that made him all the more terrifying and turned into an abstract principle the man who was unrecognizable as a human being. Entirely in this sense Himmler said of himself that he would be "a merciless sword of justice." The methods of his terrorism, based upon modern principles of organization, and the rationalized, 'industrial' extermination processes which he employed, the whole businesslike practicality of his fanaticism, have curiously intensified the aura of terror surrounding his person, beyond all actual experience.

pp 171-172

In the light of the millionfold terrors he inspired, there was a temptation to search for 'abysses' in which at least a pale gleam of some 'human' reaction might be visible, and it was that that misled people. In reality Heinrich Himmler was exactly what his appearance suggested: an insecure, vacillating character, the colour of whose

personality was grey. His lack of independence was concealed by a desperate and stupid overzealousness. What looked like a malignity or brutality was merely the conscienceless efficiency of a man whose life substance was so thinly spread that he had to borrow from outside. No emotion either carried him away or inhibited him; "His very coldness was a negative element, not glacial, but bloodless." A capable organizer and administrator, he possessed that inhuman mixture of diligence, subservience and fanatical will to carry things through that casts aside humane considerations as irrelevant, and whose secret idols are closed files of reports of tasks completed; a man at freezing point. pp 172-173



It is only in a hopelessly disrupted society that a figure like Heinrich Himmler can acquire political influence; and only under a totalitarian form of government offering universal salvation could he come to hold the power that offered some prospect of putting his ideas into practice. His sobriety and apparent common sense, which deceived outsiders, were precisely what made his career possible. "I am convinced that nobody I met in Germany is more normal," an English observer wrote in 1929. The basic pathological characteristic of the

National Socialist movement, so often and so erroneously sought in clinically obvious psychopaths like Julius Streicher, showed itself rather in the curious amalgam of crankiness and 'normality,' of insanity and sober administrative ability. Thus Streicher was pushed further and further to the sidelines, while Heinrich Himmler, who possessed the *arcanum imperii* of this system of government, quickly reached the highest power, a calculating man of faith who without doubt or challenge trampled over millions, leaving behind him a trail of blood and tears, the most dreadful combination of crackpot and manipulator of power, of quack and inquisitor, that history has ever known. Concentration camps and herb gardens, such as he had planted at Dachau and elsewhere: these are still the most apt symbols of his personality. p 176

On 6 January 1929 Himmler, at the same time running a chicken farm at Waldtrudering near Munich, was appointed head of the then barely three-hundred-man-strong SS. He proved his abilities as an organizer by expanding the force to over 50,000 men by 1933. . . .

When on 17 June 1936 Himmler was finally appointed head of the now unified police forces of the Reich and confirmed as Reichsführer of the SS, he seemed to have reached the peak of an astounding career. He now controlled a substantial portion of the real power and also, thanks to the terror that he spread, an even greater part of the psychological power. pp 179-180

Himmler's comprehensive and unitary organization provided the totalitarian government with the systematic control that now enabled it to operate to its fullest extent. No sooner had Himmler, in the course of capturing power, seized control of the police than a perceptible tightening of the regime could be felt. p 181

It was entirely consistent that the moral status of the SS rose with the number of its victims. As Himmler declared to the officer corps of the 'Adolf Hitler' SS Bodyguard on 7 September 1940:

“Exactly the same thing happened at forty degrees below zero in Poland when we had to carry off thousands and tens of thousands and hundreds of thousands, when we had to be so hard - as to shoot thousands of leading Poles. When we had to be so hard, because otherwise vengeance would have fallen upon us later. It is a great deal easier in many cases to go with a company into battle than to operate with a company in some region suppressing a rebellious population at a low level of culture, carrying out executions, transporting people away, taking away howling and weeping women.”

However, it was not merely the ethos of hardness that gave such utterances by Himmler their decisive twist, but rather the vulgar and calculating pride in his own capacity for inhumanity with which the pedant and the former model pupil of the King Wilhelm Gymnasium in Munich sought to establish his leadership among his murder-and-battle-hardened subordinates. pp 183-184

The human experiments in the laboratories of the concentration camps, which displayed a horrifying amateurism, yielded not the slightest useful result because their real purpose was merely to act as a blind; in the words of one of the doctors involved, Himmler wanted to prove “that he was not a murderer but a patron of science.” Any remaining feelings of guilt were removed by the assertion, delivered with the pseudo-tragic pose of provincial demonism, that it was “the curse of the great to have to walk over corpses.” Behind this, conjured up more zealously than ever, lay that concept of a Greater German post-war empire which, beyond the extermination which he carried out with routine conscientiousness, he was planning and preparing. pp 186-187

He greeted the representative of the World Jewish Congress, who came to see him on 21 April 1945, with the unbelievable words: “Welcome to Germany, Herr Masur. It is time you Jews and we National Socialists buried the hatchet.” He indulged in speculation upon what he would do as soon as he came to power, and seriously hoped, up to the day of his arrest, that the Western allies would greet him as a partner in negotiations and even as an ally against Soviet Russia. p 189

During these weeks of the collapse of the Third Reich the SS Reichsführer Heinrich Himmler was an opportunist fighting stubbornly to delay the end. In vain did those around him press him to declare himself and assume responsibility for the SS. On 19 March he was still conjuring up apocalyptic visions of a last-ditch stand to the last man “like the Ostrogoths on Vesuvius”; now he thought only of disguise and flight. “One thing can never be forgiven among us Germans: that is treachery,” he had assured his followers a few months earlier. No small number of the SS, especially members of the elite groups, committed suicide when they realized Heinrich Himmler’s treachery. pp 189-190

MARTIN BORMANN: THE BROWN EMINENCE



From too great a distance, as from too close, a totalitarian system of government looks like a single tightly knit block whose massive structure towers over society, as vast as it is impenetrable. However, this impression, based upon the determination and the merciless energy with which such governments achieve their purposes, is an illusion.

pp 191

When Hitler appointed him executor of his will, Bormann attained his ultimate ambition of complete identification with the central will of the National Socialist power structure. Sober, calculating and coldly diligent, he had always sought power alone, never its insignia. The latter seemed to him mere foolishness and evidence of misdirected cupidity that clung to externals. Almost unnoticed, with his characteristic silent persistence, he had risen step by step within a short time. He was never called more than 'Director of the Party Chancellery' and 'the Fuhrer's secretary', and yet during the declining years of the Hitler regime no one was more powerful.

pp 193-194

No one was more hated. The contempt aroused by the Neronic pomposity of Goring, Ribbentrop's absurdity, or even Himmler's bloodthirsty reputation, all the mutual antipathies that built up within the top leadership through years of rivalry, were of a different kind and not to be compared with the intensity of the bitterness his countless enemies felt towards this Machiavelli of the office desk. Hans Frank, who called him an 'arch-scoundrel', remarked that the word 'hate' was "far too weak", and even his personal colleagues and secretaries - who in every other case, without exception, could find a good word for their superior - expressed only aversion [toward Bormann] at Nuremberg.

pp 194-195

Within the smooth-functioning mechanism of his bureaucratic apparatus, man was the only element not entirely calculable, a latent deviation, the element of an unreliability that he knew he alone did not share. According to the available evidence he did not smoke, did not drink, ate with moderation, and possessed no inclination of his own, no interests, no hobbies, but probably there was here, not a consciously austere attitude of renunciation, but merely the puritanism of an impersonality that was without needs because it knew no needs. His peculiar advantages derived from just this lack of personality-forming factors. He was eager to serve, unobtrusive, down to earth, and even his enemies have always stressed his unparalleled diligence.

pp 196-197

Through his supervision of the lists of Hitler's visitors he kept a suspicious watch over the Fuhrer's contacts with the outside world and, in the words of an observer, "erected a positive Chinese wall through which people were admitted only after showing their empty hands and explaining in detail to Bormann the purpose of their visit. By this means he had absolute control over the whole machinery of the Reich."

Towards the end of the war Hitler positively thanked him for, in effect, closing the doors more and more tightly against everyone who tried to bring the cold air of reality

into the musty world of insane delusions and fantasies that prevailed in the Fuhrer's headquarters. His intimate knowledge of Hitler's weaknesses and personal peculiarities gave him an advantage over all his rivals. Even Goebbels, when early in 1945 he sent an album of photographs of ploughed-up streets and shattered architectural monuments to the Fuhrer's headquarters, received it back from Bormann with the comment that the Fuhrer did not want to be bothered "with such trivial matters."

p 200

His directives on policy towards the churches refer repeatedly to "diminution of power," "possibilities of exercising influence," and the "right to lead the people"; and when, in his famous order to the Gauleiters of 6-7 June 1941 on the "relations between National Socialism and Christianity," he tried with dreary impertinence to place an ideological cloak around ideas relating purely to the acquisition of power, he could not avoid eventually revealing the true cause of this hostility:

"National Socialist and Christian conceptions are incompatible. The Christian churches build upon men's ignorance; by contrast N[ational Socialism] rests upon *scientific* foundations. When we [National Socialists] speak of belief in God, we do not mean, like the naive Christians and their spiritual exploiters, a man-like being sitting around somewhere in the universe. The force governed by natural law by which all these countless planets move in the universe, we call omnipotence or God. The assertion that this universal force can trouble itself about the destiny of each individual being, every smallest earthly bacillus, can be influenced by so-called prayers or other surprising things, depends upon a requisite dose of naivety or else upon shameless professional self-interest."

Only then does Bormann pass over to arguments based upon the crucial considerations of power. Since Adolf Hitler himself has the leadership of the people in his hands:

"All influences which might restrict or even damage the leadership of the people exercised by the Fuhrer with the aid of the NSDAP must be eliminated. The people must be increasingly wrested from the churches and their instruments the priests. Naturally the churches, looking at matters from their point of view, will and must resist this diminution of power. But never again must the churches be allowed any influence over the leadership of the people. This must be broken totally and forever. Only then will the existence of nation and Reich be assured."

p 202

It was his declared intention largely to crush the churches even while the war was in progress. In 1941, when he found himself in tactical opposition on this point to Hitler, who considered such a clash inopportune in view of the strains and stresses of the war, he continued to pursue his plans in secret; for the war seemed to him a suitable opportunity, which would never recur, for carrying the regime's ideological aims to their logical conclusion. Here as always Bormann was resolved to go to extremes, the "advocate of all harsh measures", as he has been called.

p 203

In a memorandum of 19 August 1942 he wrote:

“The Slavs are to work for us. In so far as we do not need them, they may die. Slav fertility is undesirable. They may possess contraceptives or abort, the more the better. Education is dangerous. We shall leave them religion as a means of diversion. They will receive only the absolutely necessary provisions. We are the masters, we come first.”
p 204

He signed Hitler’s political testament, acted as witness to his marriage, and stood in the courtyard of the Reich Chancellery, along with Goebbels, General Burgdorf and a few others, under the fire of Russian shells as Hitler’s corpse went up in flames. . . .

Since then he has vanished. Between the Weidendammer Brücke and the Lehrter Station all trace of him was lost behind fountains of dust and crashing walls in that anonymity which he always sought.
p 206

ERNST ROHM AND THE LOST GENERATION



Once power had been achieved the ambitions of the SA for independence previously smouldering more or less underground, strove for open expression. Hitler solved the structural problem of the ‘double party’ with bloodshed. On 30 June 1934 and the following two days he arranged the liquidation of his old follower and friend Ernst Rohm, together with the homosexual element within the SA that had lent not merely the brown terrorist army but the whole of Hitler’s movement some of its most striking and repellent features.

Death before the firing squad against the walls of Stadelheim prison and the Lichtenfeld Military College meant for most of the high SA leaders, from Ernst Rohm through Edmund Heines down to August Schneidhuber, the identical conclusion to identical careers. Service as an officer in the war and in the Freikorps or the right-radical defence associations had in most cases been followed by half-hearted attempts to get a foothold in civilian life, as a traveler, commercial employee, estate manager or simply head of household. At intervals they cultivated the old contacts; there was a deeply ingrained longing for male companionship, for the trade of arms, for the unconstrainedness of the soldier’s life, and finally, for unrestrained indulgence in eating and drinking. These men were merely hibernating behind a bourgeois facade which they felt to be alien and ‘civilian’; meanwhile they conspired, joined in enterprises that amounted to high treason, in the assassination of Republican politicians, in vehmic murders. pp 209-210

Rohm was a fanatical soldier and officer, though without the arrogance and strained intensity that put a touch of martial demonism into the blank face of the General Staff officer of the old school. Although from childhood he had had “only one thought and wish, to be a soldier”, and towards the end of the war was actually on the General Staff and a magnificent organizer, he was much closer to the type of the field officer. He was a daredevil who had come out of the war with numerous wounds and even in his memoirs he expressed a curiously exalted aversion for the word ‘prudent’

(*besonnen*). He divided men simply into soldiers and civilians, into friend and enemy, was honest and without guile, sober, a simple-minded and straightforward swashbuckler who liked “the noise of the camp and of the quartermaster's stores.” Wherever he appeared, one of his comrades of the period of illegal military activity noted, “life came into the place, but above all *practical* work was done.” His robustly practical Bavarian mind, to which all brooding was alien, had no time for profound cults, for emotional enthusiasm for the Nordic ideal, or insane race fantasies, and he openly mocked the complex philosophical mysticism of Rosenberg, Himmler and Darre. . . .

At the same time, Rohm was a brutal boss, who gathered around him a dissolute crew who did not shrink from a bad reputation and actually prided themselves on their corruption, perverse debauchery and crimes of violence. pp 211-212

From 1923 onwards Rohm succeeded more and more openly in imposing his ideas, so that the NSDAP visibly developed into a ‘double party’ made up of two rival blocs: the SA, or Storm Troops, as Hitler had christened them after a beerhall battle that became a party legend; and the Political Organization, abbreviated to PO and contemptuously dubbed ‘P-Zero’ by the SA. Hitler at this period was little more than an expert speaker recruiting for a movement whose true core was the paramilitary organization led by Rohm, and if everything indicates that the leader of the NSDAP was at this time content with such a distribution of roles, subsequent events proved that it had its effect on his desire for self-assertion. At the latest after the unsuccessful enterprise of 9 November 1923, which saw Hitler on his knees before the authority of the state on the steps of the Feldernhalle, he realized that Rohm’s crude idea of a head-on conquest of power was hopeless and that consequently the building up of a great military party organization was fundamentally wrong. Whereas Rohm, released on probation immediately after the trial, at once tried to reassemble the shattered nationalist armed organizations, Hitler, even while still in Landsberg prison, began to dissociate himself from Rohm, to drop the military presuppositions of his plans for seizing power, and, as he proudly stressed later, remained “immune to advice.” Various half-hearted attempts by both sides to reach an understanding came to nothing, so that soon after his release Hitler brought about the break that robbed Rohm of all further opportunities for activity. pp 214-215



Shortly after the NSDAP’s great electoral victory of 14 September, [1930] Hitler therefore recalled Ernst Rohm from Bolivia, though not without first himself assuming the post of Supreme Leader of the SA and demanding from every SA leader “an oath of unconditional allegiance” to his person, as an assurance against future insubordination.

Rohm immediately obeyed the call, and the passion with which he devoted himself to his new task as Chief of Staff of the SA seemed to contain some conviction that, in spite of all contrary assurances, his former conception of the paramilitary organization and of direct action for the seizure of the state had gained ground. . . .

Nine months after Rohm had taken up his duties, the SA already numbered 170,000 men. He brought with him the whole notorious company of his friends, whose entry finally ensured the dominance of the criminal element within the SA. This left no more room for the selfless devotion to the cause, which had in any case been only a faint and fitful impulse. Rohm, it soon came to be said, was building up a “private army within the private army,” while Hitler rejected reports of criminal activities within the top leadership of the SA “utterly and vigorously” as an “impertinence”

Confident in the knowledge of its ceaselessly swelling numbers, the SA now became for the first time the instrument of calculated mass terrorism which Hitler had intended. Battles in meeting halls and in the streets, propaganda trips, the blowing up of buildings and murder spread paralysis and fear, and caused a complete breakdown of morale among the Republican forces. pp 219-220

While the SA were winning the freedom of the streets for Hitler and thus opening his road to power, the question of what was to happen to its formations after the seizure of power was becoming ever more urgent. Rohm, his self-confidence immeasurably swollen by success, now returned more provocatively than ever to the old solution: a duumvirate with Hitler as political leader and agitator and himself as generalissimo of a vast armed force in which the whole nation was to be organized. Hitler at first kept his options open by giving the SA, after 30 January 1933, the most varied tasks in an unparalleled tangle of tactical directions. Within the framework of the double revolution from above and below, it was given the role of expressing the popular anger that could no longer control itself; some of its units were now permitted, free from all the restrictions of the preceding years, to hunt, torture and murder and, in the first unsupervised concentration camps, to give vent to all the sadistic ingenuity of inhibited petty-bourgeois feelings. The number of murdered within the first nine months of the regime has been estimated at 500 to 600, the number of those sent to the concentration camps already announced by Frick on 8 March at about 100,000. pp 220-221

He [Rohm] accused Hitler of being nothing but “a civilian, an ‘artist,’ a dreamer.” From the summer of 1933 onwards he demonstratively revived the SA’s old militaristic tendencies and organized huge parades all over the Reich, voicing his discontent in numerous critical utterances on foreign policy, anti-Semitism, the destruction of the trade unions, or the suppression of freedom of expression. He turned bitterly against Goebbels, Goring, Himmler and Hess and moreover, with his plans for amalgamating the Reichswehr and the SA into a Nationalist Socialist militia, antagonized the generals, who were jealous of their privileges. “The grey rock,” he would say, “must be submerged by the brown flood.”

Thus he gradually arranged the stage upon which his own fate was to be decided. Undoubtedly no revolt was in progress when on the morning of 30 June 1934, drowsy and bemused, he was arrested by Hitler himself. p 223

There died with Ernst Rohm only those children of the revolution who, like himself, wished to achieve in a swift assault what Hitler, in his own words, sought “slowly and purposefully, in tiny steps.” Rohm's conviction, held to the last, that he was in full agreement with Hitler was entirely correct, as is shown by the evolution of the SS, the

true victor in this bloody story. For its influence, its power, later attained that all-embracing extension which Rohm had planned for his SA. And if his ambitious lieutenants had dreamt of an SA state, now the SS state became a reality. p 224

PART THREE

FUNCTIONARIES OF TOTALITARIAN RULE

FRANZ VON PAPEN AND THE CONSERVATIVE COLLABORATION



Franz von Papen came of an old Westphalian noble family, had served in a feudal regiment, and achieved a certain publicity in 1916, during the First World War, when he was expelled from the United States for conspiratorial activities while military attache. . . .

A few years after the end of the war he entered politics and became a member of the centre group in the Prussian Landtag, evidently as representative of the agrarian interests of his district. . . .

Although unsuccessful in attempts to gain a seat in the Reichstag, Papen did achieve a certain political influence over the centre newspaper *Germania*. Together with the industrialist Florian Klockner he acquired a majority of the shares in the paper and eventually became chairman of its management committee. His marriage to the daughter of a leading Saar industrialist had brought him both a considerable fortune and good connections with industry. If we add to this the fact that he had links with the high clergy as a Catholic nobleman and contacts with the Reichswehr as a former General Staff officer, we have the picture of a man who supplemented his personal inadequacies with a network of connections and achieved some importance in the intermediate realms of politics as the point of intersection of numerous interests. . . .

Papen had practised politics more in the dilettante form of establishing and exploiting contacts and had no experience of administration or leadership when on 31 May 1932 he was appointed to succeed Brüning as head of a crisis-shaken modern industrial state. . . .

The power groups that had brought about Brüning's downfall and now arranged this appointment may have been less interested in Papen himself than in his political position between centre and right. They evidently saw in him, with his insouciant activism, a suitable front man for the elimination of the severely damaged parliamentary system in the interests of an authoritarian class regime. pp 231-233

Papen used his influence for an altogether disastrous intrigue. In spite of all assertions to the contrary, it was he who took the initiative in establishing an alliance with Hitler, who was already beginning to despair of attaining power. Any hesitations he

may have had about entering into this suicidal partnership were doubtless swept aside by his natural recklessness, his arrogant assumption of his own right to lead, and an itch for revenge upon his rival Schleicher, now Chancellor in the new cabinet. . . .

The curious mixture of personal vindictiveness, blindness and arrogance which had brought about this alliance shows how far the leading elements in German conservatism had come in the long process of degeneration, and it is undoubtedly more than a coincidence that its thinking led it to Hitler. pp 235-236

Despite all warnings, Papen, Vice-Chancellor in the new cabinet, arrogantly declared, "What are you worried about? I have Hindenburg's confidence. In two months we shall have Hitler squeezed into a corner so that he squeaks."

Even if both sides entered the alliance of 'national coalition' with treacherous intentions, it soon emerged that only one side was resourceful, skilful and unscrupulous enough to turn this "system of perfidy" to its own advantage. In spite of the composition of the cabinet - eight German Nationalists to only three National Socialists - the former were unable to resist Hitler's power lust, pursued by himself and his followers with every means at their disposal. Many conservative interests were simply seized and swept away by adroit manipulation of the current of national rebirth. All the nervous efforts of Papen and his aides to assert their own image beside that of the National Socialist mass movement were simply not taken seriously by the public, in fact were totally disregarded, so that support for the new state was expressed almost exclusively as support for the dominant personality of Hitler. pp 238-239

The collaboration with National Socialism revealed how incompetent and utterly burnt out conservative nationalism was. No other social group failed so abysmally in face of the challenge. The case does not need to be reinforced by reference to the personal and financial support which Hitler received, in particular during the years of his rise to power, from landowners, leaders of heavy industry and other interested parties. . . .

"Dear lady, we have fallen into the hands of criminals, how could I have suspected that?" wrote Schacht in summer 1938. Actually, anyone capable of sober, uncorrupted thought would not merely have suspected this but known it without a shadow of doubt long before 1938. It was above all the loss of integrity, the intellectual corruptibility and the capacity to close its eyes that led conservatism first into Hitler's company and then inevitably into alliance with him. When a documentary film on the concentration camps and mass extermination centres of the Third Reich was shown in the Nuremberg court-room, Papen covered his face with his hands. It was more than a spontaneous gesture of horror: it symbolized an attitude. "I did not want to see Germany's shame," he declared later. He had never wanted to see it, though he had helped to bring it about. pp 243-244

ALFRED ROSENBERG: THE FORGOTTEN DISCIPLE



The rising movement took over the most diverse ideological elements, and its lack of loyalty towards ideas matched the calculating spirit in which they had been picked up. It had absorbed racial, anti-Semitic, biological and pan-German concepts along with others of an emotional pro-peasant, anti-civilization, militaristic and pseudo-religious nature. Among them flitted the shades of the German Romantics, Wagner, Nietzsche and Paul de Lagarde; the mood of the time was reflected in nationalist, monarchist, federalist and socialist ideas. Down to eccentric reformers like the new pagans and believers in the Garden of Eden, there was scarcely a trend of those years that did not, at least for a time, make its

contribution to the conglomerate of National Socialist ideology. “We have picked our ideas from all the bushes along our life’s path,” Hitler once declared, “and we no longer know where they came from.” p 248

Soon after his [Rosenberg’s] meeting with Hitler, arranged by Dietrich Eckart, and his entry into the party, he fostered emigre discontent through the *Lebensraum* idea, the basic foreign policy concept of the Hitler movement, while the impressions received in the Thule Society marked the direction and style of his secondary philosophical undertaking. The very titles of his first publication make this clear enough: “The Tracks of the Jew Through the Ages” and “Immorality in the Talmud” (1920), “The Crime of Freemasonry” (1921), “The Morass, or Plague in Russia” (1922). He was also one of the main disseminators of the famous forgery “The Protocols of the Elders of Zion and Jewish World Politics” (1923), which with all his naive-courageous readiness for self-committal he had republished in 1940. In this and all his subsequent writings he revealed himself as a man of profound half-culture, acquainted with countless apocryphal sources and theories and all the cranky tract literature of pathological nationalist fanaticism, a reader who assimilated his mass of reading rapidly, uncritically, and inaccurately, so that the result was always in line with his preconceived opinions. pp 252-253

Rosenberg was soon outdone by his more adroit rivals in the struggles for power at the top of the movement, and forced into the thankless role of the man who has continually to point to merits and rights recognized earlier, and this was due not only to their greater ruthlessness but also to his own narrow-mindedness. He pursued Goebbels, Ribbentrop and Ley with deep and earnest hatred after they had forced their way into departments for which, as the ideological high priest, he considered himself alone competent. He was a jealous, intolerable grumbler who could play the part of a particularly fanatic racist or, if circumstances demanded, of a mouthpiece for Jewish interests. He set his heart on taking over the foreign ministry in any cabinet formed by Hitler. Consequently he never got over the fact that he was passed over in 1933 and, apart from functions connected with ideology and political education, was entrusted solely with the Foreign Department of the NSDAP. . . .

His department had little to do but look after foreign visitors, and Goring stated in Nuremberg that it “was never once listened to in matters concerning foreign policy.”
pp 256-257

Rosenberg's bitterest disappointment, however, came in spring 1938, when Hitler, in appointing a new Foreign Minister, once more passed over him in favour of the despised careerist Ribbentrop. His worst premonitions were confirmed in summer 1939 when Ribbentrop concluded the Moscow Pact, the political advantages of which did not offset its ideological lack of principle in his eyes.
p 259

The Moscow Pact struck a decisive blow against Rosenberg's naive loyalty to his Fuhrer, maintained till then in spite of all humiliations. Thenceforth he believed that the backbone had been torn out of National Socialism and Hitler himself had apostatized to the camp of the opportunists who betrayed an epoch-making cause to the needs of day-to-day politics. Deeply wounded by National Socialist realities, he henceforth withdrew more and more into his confused world of National Socialist ideas, lonely but with his feelings intact.
p 260

It was his misfortune always to have stood above his station, however low it may have been. In his clumsy handling of power, his laborious German tendency to complication and his superstition he was not only hopelessly inferior to all his rivals, but in no way was he the figure of a modern totalitarian leader. He was a follower, material for the technicians of irrational modern social religion to work upon. If, in phrases of Pareto's, the art of ruling consists in exploiting emotions instead of wasting time on vainly attempting to destroy them, this was precisely what he never understood in his excited missionary zeal.
p 262

The evidence before the Nuremberg court, which unequivocally proves that he knew about and indirectly took part in the measures for the extermination of the Jews, makes his horror over Auschwitz and Theresienstadt highly incredible. But if it was genuine, so certainly was the dull-wittedness with which he lied his way out of it, speaking of a “great disease of National Socialism,” a temporary degeneration for which he blamed above all Goebbels, Himmler, Bormann and officials like Erich Koch. To the end he never realized that the injustices of National Socialism were inherent in it, that the terrible practice grew in the soil of a terrible theory. pp 263-264

JOACHIM VON RIBBENTROP AND THE DEGRADATION OF DIPLOMACY



Among the few ideas that Hitler held to throughout his life, unaltered by any compromise demanded by the tactics of power, was the conviction of the supremacy of force. He took up the old dictum that struggle is the father of all things, which the popular philosophy of the nineteenth century had interpreted in the tritest possible way, and construed it as meaning that murder, cruelty, cunning or brutality were the right of a higher humanity and proof of an unspoilt morality.
p 265

Whereas in past ages only the leading groups had been conscious of the conflict between the norms of accepted morality and the demands of the state, now, in a way quite different from that anticipated by the liberal and democratic spokesmen of the twentieth century, awareness of this conflict became infinitely widespread without creating any feeling of tension. What had been held out as liberation from dependence on uncontrollable old-style power politics, and as the elimination of the ‘double morality’ of power politics, proved on the contrary to be the point at which precisely this double morality entered into the whole of society. The new situation was marked by the increasingly unashamed disparagement, by ever-widening circles of the population, of all forms of public ethics, which were condemned as a “soft morality of sentiment and renunciation.” . . .

The conviction that the state had a morality of its own had hitherto been held only by those in leadership and acted on only after weighing up all the factors involved. Now it became the “everyday morality of the little man,” as Karl Mannheim wrote, “who today practises power politics such as we find in the past only in the secret documents of leading statesmen.” . . .

Faith in force, in unscrupulous violence, rapturously proclaimed by Hitler, worked on these groups and classes like magic and had a far more lasting influence than the hazy National Socialist ideology. Here the ‘natural law’ traditionally surrounded by a zone of silence was openly stated, the formula for success openly displayed with its promise of satisfying all the nation’s needs at one blow. The “Machiavellianism of the masses” had culminated in the appearance of Hitler and now became a political force.

pp 266-267

In response to a chance remark by Hitler that he could not follow the foreign press because of his ignorance of foreign languages, Ribbentrop, the wine and spirits importer, was recommended to him as a reader. Ribbentrop not only had a good knowledge of languages but had also been the author of a political newsletter which was sent to business contacts at home and abroad and which took a nationalist and anti-Bolshevik line. Hitler accepted him, influenced not least by his outward appearance as a man of the world. This was the start of a rapid rise in a career of astounding incompetence.

p 268

The vanity, the provocative self-assertion and continual self-dramatization, were merely the reverse side of his very ordinary personality; on the sleeves of the fantastic diplomatic uniform which he had designed for him there was embroidered a terrestrial globe dominated by an eagle. His desire to please and his ambition were as great as the ruthlessly fraudulent means by which he sought to satisfy them.

p 270

In the so-called Ribbentrop Bureau, which he provocatively set up opposite the German Foreign Office in the former house of the Prussian Minister-President, he created in spring 1933 a staff, at first small but soon numbering more than 300, to satisfy his ambitions in the field of foreign policy. He later explained that the function of this office was restricted to the creation of ‘good will’ abroad. In fact, however, he used it to carry on a stubborn and ruthless war with the Foreign Office. He found himself emphatically supported in this by Hitler, who fostered such rival claims to

jurisdiction not only because they made it easier for him to maintain his own power, but also out of a deep-seated aversion for the Foreign Office. . . .

Hitler was obviously impressed by his brutal directness, and his curt, domineering tone was in keeping with Hitler's views on the style of National Socialist foreign policy. p 272

In the first moves towards cold-shouldering the Foreign Office, Ribbentrop achieved an astonishing success in the early summer of 1933 with the conclusion of the Anglo-German Naval Agreement. It was of course due less to his tactless and blackmailing conduct of the negotiations than to the vacillations of British policy, to wavering in London and Paris. In neither city could the authorities make up their minds whether the dynamism of Hitler's regime was to be halted by cautiously meeting him halfway or by vigorously opposing him. In both they veered between distrust and attempts to minimize the danger. Thus they found themselves facing precisely that problem which had dominated the political situation inside Germany before 1933 and they confronted it in the same deluded and contradictory manner, handing Hitler his successes and then disputing them with him ever more helplessly and nervously. pp 273-274

The tactics were always the same: an initial announcement of unconditional demands, immediately followed by a surprise attack, and then a peace offer coupled with the assurance that no further demands would be made, until the game began all over again. At first they bewildered the adversary and put the European powers in a state of paralysis which was further intensified by the constant threat of war, but it was to be expected that this diplomacy by challenge must soon reach its natural limits. As early as 1937 Weizsacker noted in the margin of an embassy report from London that this was a policy of "accelerating the Last Judgement." Ribbentrop, however, seems never to have been aware of this. p 276

A close colleague of Goebbels overheard a conversation between Ribbentrop and Hitler that reveals the inconceivable cynicism of this policy. "When the war is over," boasted the Foreign Minister, "I shall have a finely carved chest made for myself. I shall put in it all the state agreements and other contracts between governments that I have broken during my period in office and I shall break in the future." Hitler replied jokingly, "And I shall send you a second chest when the first one is full." . . .



The first inkling of what he [Ribbentrop] had started may have come when the British ultimatum reached the Reich Chancellery on 3 September 1939, and Hitler spat out that furious "What now?" which Ribbentrop could answer only with a meaningless rhetorical flourish. The rapid triumphs of the early phase of the war, which carried the Third Reich to the zenith of its power, swept away all hesitation; and when the first difficulties arose with the breaking off of 'Operation Sea Lion,' the principle of flight forward into new adventures, new campaigns, helped to stun any lasting realization of the truth.

On 22 June 1941 the most disastrous step on this path was taken: German armies launched an invasion of Soviet Russia. Among his closest confederates Hitler said, "I feel as though I were pushing open a door into a dark room I had never seen - not

knowing what lies behind the door.” This, fundamentally, was how they had always conducted foreign policy. pp 277-278

It is reported that in spring 1943 “he received no further support from Hitler, who derided him as a busybody.” As his influence waned, his desire to extend his jurisdiction increased, so that according to his secretary he was soon devoting “at least 60 per cent of his time” to futile conflicts with rivals. He tried to regain part of his influence, following the well-tryed method of his rivals, by taking an active part in the policy of exterminating the Jews and urging Germany’s allies to speed up evacuation of their Jewish populations; naturally this attempt had no lasting effect. pp 278-279

G.M. Gilbert [Nuremberg court psychologist] advanced the theory that each of the leaders of the Third Reich at Nuremberg possessed a kind of “second line of defence.” The diplomats and military men took refuge in their social standard, Goring adopted an attitude of self-conscious heroism, Hess escaped into hysteria, others identified themselves with certain ideas, traditions or rediscovered certainties of faith; only Ribbentrop had nothing left to retreat to after Hitler’s death. He possessed neither a conviction nor the support of an aristocratic origin, and in the narrow sobriety of his nature even escape into a psychopathological condition was barred to him. The world of Hitler, which for a while had inflated and maintained his unsubstantial ego, now after the collapse left a vacuum in which he could no longer keep himself erect. This is the only explanation for his spinelessness, the tearful tone of his statements, and his degeneration even outwardly in clothing and bearing. p 281

RUDOLPH HESS: THE EMBARRASSMENT OF FREEDOM



In their certainty of promise, their intolerance, the inexorable alternative of subservience or domination, but also in the order constituted by a favoured elite and a hierarchic structure, totalitarian systems in modern times have copied and still copy, to some extent consciously, the metaphysical or sociological structures of Western religious societies. . . .

But the totalitarian systems, in doing away with ‘heaven’, did not simultaneously do away with hells, but actually established them for the first time, because however far and however consistently the parallels with religion were drawn, they did not possess the power of grace and forgiveness. On the other hand their demands went far beyond all traditional forms of dictatorial rule. While the dictators’ urge to power was basically satisfied with the elimination of all positive movements, totalitarian systems continually seek positive manifestations of faith; they demand, not the loyal servant of the state, but the idolator. pp 283-284

Sola fide, by faith alone, Rudolf Hess rose from depressed, introverted student to deputy leader of a great power. . . Expressions of unconditional and ardent devotion mark his path from the day of his first meeting with Hitler, when he felt, in his own words, “as though overcome by a vision,” down to his closing words at Nuremberg, when he escaped for a moment from his fantasies and dreams and gazed for one brief,

ecstatic instant into the world outside: “It was granted me for many years to live and work under the greatest son whom my nation has brought forth in the thousand years of its history.” p 285

His image remained blurred, even after he had entered the cabinet at the end of 1933 as a kind of minister for the party. His innocence kept him from joining his former colleagues in the wholehearted intrigue for power; he simply wanted to be loyal and serve the Fuhrer. He was often called “the conscience of the party,” but in his undemanding readiness to serve he was grossly overestimated. He was incapable of taking any moral initiative, since for him the highest morality lay in the “blindly trusting subservience” of which he had spoken, and he regarded himself as a tool of ‘the man,’ for whom he was prepared to make any sacrifice of conscience. pp 289-290

He was convinced the stars ruled human destiny, had diagrams worked out for him by an old soothsayer, and devoted himself earnestly to the tortuous efforts of the practitioners of terrestrial radiations, animal magnetism, pendulum diagnosis, and the various means of foretelling the future. When he flew to Britain his pockets were filled with medicaments and drugs, mostly of a homeopathic nature, among them an elixir supposed to have been brought from Tibet by Sven Hedin. p 290

The neglected deputy of the Fuhrer was already preparing for the enterprise that dumbfounded an incredulous world on 10 May 1941. With a kind of confused heroism he secretly flew to Britain in the middle of the war with a personal peace proposal to the Duke of Hamilton, about whom he knew nothing. The essence of the plan was that Germany should be given a free hand for its *Lebensraum* politics within Europe and in return would guarantee the undiminished continuation of the British Empire.

While the British noted these proposals without comment, and shut Hess up as a prisoner of war, Hitler was profoundly shocked and announced that if Hess returned he should be “put in a madhouse or shot.” During a conference on 13 May Hitler was “in tears and looked ten years older,” while Goebbels intimated that Hess’s flight was “more serious than the desertion of an army corps.” pp 291-292



According to the Nuremberg court physician Douglas M. Kelley, Hess as early as 1940 was in a mental state “not far removed from a severe nervous breakdown.” Hess himself declared in England that he had reached this “most serious decision of his life” after “an endless series of children’s coffins with weeping mothers behind them” had repeatedly appeared before his eyes. It is possible that dismay at the ruthless extermination policy in Poland may also have played a part. The psychologists have further pointed out that the flight may be attributed to the discovery “that his ‘father-substitute’, Hitler, was not a god but a cruel and violent man”; but against this, it is certain that Hess did not think of treason. It is much more probable that the motives first mentioned condensed among the wild phantasmagoria of his emotional life into a decision to perform an act of self-sacrifice for Fuhrer and Fatherland in a deed of constructive disobedience. p 293

ALBERT SPEER AND THE IMMORTALITY OF THE TECHNICIANS



The self-chosen isolation of the technological mind is one of the keys to its total readiness to serve, and the specialist who sees himself as a function in an environment which he neither sees nor wishes to see as a whole meets totalitarianism halfway.

As almost no one else under the Third Reich, Albert Speer, Hitler's architect and later Minister of Armaments, represented this type of the narrow specialist and his technocratic amorality, until both met their refutation in him. For it was not so much ambition, the lure of an exalted career, and the almost unlimited creative possibilities open to a court artist which kept him for so many years tied to a regime whose methods were bound to be repulsive to a man of his origins and character. It was predominantly his belief that the terrorism, of which he was well aware, the persecution of minorities, arbitrary decisions, concentration camps, aggression against other countries were not his business; all this was 'politics,' whereas he was an architect, a technologist, an artist. Even at Nuremberg he still maintained that his "task was a technological and economic one", not political, and to the question did he not, as an educated man, realize that the forcible transportation of foreign workers was contrary to the law of nations, he replied that he was an architect and all he knew about law was what he read in the papers.

pp 300-301

For all his exceptional gifts, he was no *genie bete*, nor was he insensitive, unimaginative, or deaf to conscience. On the contrary, he was intelligent, life-orientated, and no doubt also sensitive, but imbued with the traditional anti-social indifference of the artist and technologist, which left him dead to all challenges of political origin.

p 301

All the planning was monotonously and indistinguishably determined by 'gigantic' proportions, after the traditional ambition of dictators to create in huge buildings monuments that would outlast the short-lived dominion of their own persons. . . .

The extant plans show every sign of arrogant megalomania. A domed hall was to be erected a hundred feet high to seat 100,000. Among the party buildings designed to give the city of Nuremberg "its future and hence everlasting style" was a congress hall for 60,000, a stadium "such as the world has never seen before," and a parade ground for a million people. The excavations alone would have called for 40 miles of railway track, 600 million bricks would have been required for the foundations, and the outer walls would have been 270 feet high. Hitler paid particular attention to the durability of the bricks and other materials, so that thousands of years later the buildings should bear witness to the grandeur of his power as the pyramids of Egypt testified to the power and splendour of the Pharaohs.

pp 305-306

Hitler's relations with Speer had a remarkably sentimental character in striking contrast to the coldness and self-interest of his other human contacts. Perhaps he saw in the young architect, with his energy, brilliance and ability to achieve extraordinary results with apparent ease, his other self, freely developed and without the twists

placed by a malevolent destiny to which, in his all-pervading self-pity, he still ascribed the failure of his early ambitions. p 307

He was thirty-six when, after the mysterious death of Fritz Todt, he took over the Ministry for Armament and Munitions. He had already from time to time been concerned with problems of organization and transport, and he set about his new tasks energetically and with unorthodox solutions, quickly overcoming the first critical hold-ups in the mechanism of the German armaments industry. Improvising with typical courage, he bridged over transport links that had been destroyed, rebuilt factories, established new industries, went personally to the front to find out for himself the advantages or weaknesses of the weapons and equipment used by the troops, and, as Goebbels noted in his diary, “rode rough-shod over the high military gentlemen.”

Without the efforts of Speer, who by 1943 had concentrated more than 80 per cent of German industrial capacity in his hands, Hitler would unquestionably not have been able to continue the war so long and might possibly, as Speer himself conjectured, have had to admit defeat as early as 1942 or 1943. pp 308-309

In an effort to make the Fuhrer more reasonable and alert him to the breakdown of the war effort now inevitable for economic and technical reasons, Speer wrote innumerable memoranda. In one dated 30 January 1945 beginning “The war is lost” he tried to combat the illusions of the fantasy world of the Fuhrer’s headquarters. He made a comprehensive analysis of the situation, but without achieving anything more than the henceforth unconcealed hostility of Bormann and also of Goebbels, who for a long time had stood by him. Hitler, on the other hand, in view of the opening sentence, refused to read the memorandum at all. Speer slipped into disfavour and thereupon, with typical independence, he began systematically to work against Hitler’s plans for the annihilation of Germany. p 310



While Hitler’s egocentricity clearly took the form of disappointed hatred of his own people, Speer went to work openly against his plans. Although his authority to give orders was expressly withdrawn, he traveled to zones near the front, convinced the local authorities of the senselessness of the orders they had received, had explosives immersed in water, and supplied the controllers of important undertakings with submachine guns with which to protect themselves against the demolition squads. When eventually called to account by Hitler, he repeated that the war was lost. Hitler gave

him twenty-four hours to think it over. But instead of an assurance that he had regained his faith in victory, Speer handed him a detailed memorandum analysing their mutual relationship and demanding withdrawal of the demolition order of 19 March. Nevertheless, he finally succeeded in propitiating Hitler to the extent of regaining his official powers. Exploiting the general confusion of orders, Speer then issued numerous instructions some in the name of other authorities such as the Army High Command or the Reich Railways, some in his own name, which he withheld

from Hitler and which at times merely served the purpose of intensifying the chaos and paralysing the work of destruction. . . .

Finally, in his 'despair,' as he said, he evolved a plan to kill Hitler, along with the self-centred company that had buried itself in the bunkers of the Reich Chancellery in a mood of apocalyptic doom, by feeding poison gas into the underground ventilation system. Hitler, in Speer's view, "had originally been called upon by the people", and "he had no right to gamble away their destiny along with his own." But a last-minute alteration to the ventilation shaft carried out on Hitler's own instructions frustrated this plan. Once again Hitler had escaped an attempt on his life. p 312

"They were all under his spell," Speer said of Hitler's leading henchmen. "They obeyed him blindly, with no will of their own, whatever the medical term for this phenomenon may be." But he was the exception, the only man in Hitler's immediate entourage who refused to sacrifice either his own will or the guidance of his own reason and character, as the majority did so eagerly. The apologetic nature of the memoirs and autobiographical notes the others wrote at this time set forth the thesis of Hitler's compulsive power and the ostensibly irresistible magic of his will. Speer's example proves that it was rather the weakness and insignificance of the men who made up his entourage that ensured the 'Führer' his unchallenged superiority right to the end. pp 312-313

He was sentenced at Nuremberg to twenty years' imprisonment. But his attempt to escape responsibility behind his role as a technocrat was not mentioned in the explanation of the verdict; for this is not a matter that lies within the jurisdiction of the criminal code, but one of conscience. . . .

Speer was found guilty on ground of his participation in the forced labour programme. p 314

HANS FRANK: IMITATION OF A MAN OF VIOLENCE



Hans Frank was one of the most equivocal figures among the National Socialist top leadership, weak, unstable and full of strange contradictions. Behind the bloody image of the "slayer of Poles" and the party's leading jurist we see, on closer inspection, an insecure and vacillating character; Frank's unrestrained veneration for the person of Hitler and for the party programme of the NSDAP - which throughout his life he completely misinterpreted in keeping with illusions rooted in theatrical idealism - carried him to the most abysmal depths of criminality. p 315

He never belonged to the innermost circle of the leadership; the stigma of middle-class origins, which only Speer and Ribbentrop really succeeded in overcoming, no doubt prevented that. . . .

The function of the 'middle-class' leaders was solely to provide a backcloth of respectability and various forms of ideological cover for the movement's ruthless will to power. . . .

Whatever pseudo-rational structure they contributed to the National Socialist ideology, strictly speaking they had no say in practical policy, and Hitler, to whom "being educated and being weak" meant the same thing, made little effort to hide his contempt for them. pp 315-316

Undoubtedly Hans Frank too, after joining the National Socialist movement, believed for a long time that he had found in Adolf Hitler a partner for the realization of those dreams in which he saw himself winning immortality as the creator of a legal system linked to the people and based on ancient Germanic ideas. p 319

Head of NSDAP's legal office since 1929, he became in 1933, in the course of the capture of power in the *Lander*, Bavarian Minister of Justice and soon afterwards 'Reich Commissioner for the Standardization of Justice in the *Lander* and for the Renewal of Legal Order,' as the official title ran. The Association of German National Socialist Jurists, led by himself and till then rather obscure, swelled during those months, as a result of the opportunist rush to join, into a mass organization which, by the end of 1933, already numbered 80,000 members and could certainly have lent its weight to the isolated attempts made to assert the independence of law. . . .

It became, rather, not merely an important instrument within the framework of legal and personal politics for imposing the party line, but also an ideological weapon for facilitating the breakthrough of totalitarian concepts into wide areas of the legal profession. The effects here were all the more devastating because the tactic of disguising the revolution as both legal and national caught the legal profession, as it had the civil service as a whole, at its weakest point. pp 321-322

His personal prestige in the eyes of Hitler and the top leadership was severely reduced after he had raised certain formal objections at the time of Rohm's murder. In any case, as he himself said with good reason, he was "after 1934 a slowly but steadily declining political force." Once having achieved his goal, Hitler no longer needed the law and Frank's complaint that "never once in all these years" had Hitler received him in audience "on legal matters" merely showed his naivety. pp 322-323

In the middle of September 1939, Hitler recalled him from an army unit in Potsdam and appointed him civilian administrative chief with the Commander-in-Chief East and, with effect from 26 October of the same year, Governor-General of the occupied territory of Poland. The post seemed tailor-made for Frank's histrionic thirst for prestige, and with the ostentation of an oriental despot he moved into the old royal palace in Cracow, set on a rocky plateau falling steeply to the Vistula. Here he resided with the extravagant ceremonial that went with his nature, regarding himself "with audacious romanticism as a vassal king set by Hitler over Poland," lord of life and death, unpredictable in magnanimity or brutality, carrying on a patriarchal, arbitrary rule, the principles of which were manifestly gleaned at random from reading of the ways of supermen, the style of a world power, German consciousness of mission, and cheap literature on Slav psychology. p 323

The subjugated Polish territories became a model police state and a high school for the cadres who were to exercise totalitarian power. But it was the SS who here, inexorably and almost unhindered, developed the technique and the technicians of the SS state, and what emerged was later used to perfect the totalitarian apparatus inside Germany.

p 324

The idea of a Polish constitutional state, which seemed originally to be the guiding principle, was soon abandoned, as were projects tending towards protectorate status and Frank's own vague "idea of a German multi-national empire." Hitler shied away from any clear commitment all the more because at a very early stage he had allowed the idea to get about that he would never give up this territory. Frank had to be content with the formula, which had no precise meaning in international law, that Poland was to be a "secondary country (*Nebenland*) of the Reich"; this kept all the options open while it gave the office of Governor-General a certain sovereignty. Hitler's original instructions to him read, "to assume the administration of the conquered territories with the special order ruthlessly to exploit this region as a war zone and booty country, to reduce it, as it were, to a heap of rubble in its economic, social, cultural and political structure."

p 326

Hitler, deeply entangled in his racial resentment, was demanding the impossible - to exploit and to exterminate at the same time. Only after his repeated suggestions to Hitler had fallen on deaf ears did Frank, who wanted a policy of practical utility, begin to steer a cautious course in the opposite direction to Hitler's demands. However, this policy was continually frustrated by the terrorist line of SS Obergruppenführer Kruger and by Frank's own alternative policy of harshness in reaction to this.

p 327

BALDUR VON SCHIRACH AND THE 'MISSION OF THE YOUNGER GENERATION'



The soldier became the ideal figure, the command structure, the model of organization, and where pre-war youth had wandered the Bundische Jugend began to march. It was in keeping with their divorce from reality that the idea of a 'soldierly existence' was based not on the real experiences of the war but upon vainglorious illusions; not upon dirt, disgust and the fear of death, but upon that myth of the front-line soldier with which the older generation compensated for defeat. The first steps towards a contempt for life developed by the Wandervogel, the battlefield romanticism with "mounds of dead," the transfiguration of striking and stabbing and throttling, the whole aestheticization of violent death culminating in the intoxication of grandiose disasters, now underwent unlimited extension in an ignorantly blissful shudder before the Nibelungen and the Last of the Goths, before the Lost Warrior Bands of the Middle Ages, before Langemarck, Koltshak and the Samurai ideal praised by Tusk, the leader of the 'German Youth 1.11.' All this was not merely the expression of a historicizing hero-worship, but also a symptom of a deep-rooted tendency of German educational tradition to prepare the young for death rather than life. Rarely did the character of the Bundische Jugend, in its mixture of

commonplace metaphysics, ego-assertion, and pseudo-military spirit, find for itself a more apt formula than in the “German trinity” proclaimed by one of its members: “God, myself and my weapons.” pp 340-341

At the beginning of April [1933], Obergebietsfuhrer Nabersberg, with fifty Hitler Youth members, seized the building of the Reich Committee of German Youth Associations in a surprise attack, giving the cue for an uncompromising elimination of all the other youth groups, even the *volkisch* groups, so that it was soon possible to announce the end of “everything which in the past could be referred to as the German Youth Movement.” The Hitler Youth organization, rising quickly, through the influx of members from all camps, to a membership of millions, was given “the task of becoming the most important educational force in National Socialist society and was developed into a system for including and influencing the whole of youth.” “The fighting elite of the Hitler Youth must now become the national youth,” was the motto of the new phase.

On 17 June 1933 the twenty-six-year-old Baldur von Schirach was appointed Youth Leader of the German Reich. . . He enjoyed some esteem within the Hitler Youth, but he was never popular, especially with the lower ranks; he was regarded as a bit of a literary figure, and on many sides he met a contempt that was only held in check by his position as leader. His speeches too failed to inspire; they were full of sentimental enthusiasm but lacking in fire, “a blend of academic lecture and lyrical poem.” Nevertheless he took his ideals seriously, and within the narrow area which they left him he exercised his own judgement and gave evidence of open-mindedness and a certain amount of moral courage, as for example on the day after the so-called Crystal Night on which windows of Jewish shops were smashed throughout Germany, when he called together the top leaders of the Hitler Youth in Berlin, spoke of a “disgrace to civilization,” and forbade the Hitler Youth to take any part in “criminal actions” of this kind. His approach to ideology was innocent of cynical calculation; he ‘simply believed,’ and saw acts of violence and terrorism as deviations from the pure idea, which he pursued to the end unwaveringly and true to his boyish concept of loyalty. p 343

Of the slogans which Schirach now enunciated year by year in order to designate the points requiring special organizational or ideological emphasis, the first, that for 1934, was “The Year of Inner Education and Orientation.” The assault on the individual, so characteristic of the totalitarian nature of the regime, was directed most consistently towards youth and aimed at including every individual, at every single phase of his development, within an organization and subjecting him to a planned course of indoctrination. “The Hitler Youth seeks to embrace both the whole of youth and the whole sphere of life of the young German.” The movement thus provided the first step in an almost faultless system for the organization and indoctrination of every individual. p 345

The elimination of the Bund groups and Hitler’s decree of 17 June 1933, giving Schirach control of all youth work, cleared the decks for the construction of a state youth organization. By the end of 1934 it had more than three and a half million members, by the end of 1936 around six million. This was due not merely to compulsion and the well-tried methods of psychological pressure, but also to a

considerable extent to the wave of nationalist enthusiasm by which the young were seized and carried away, showing even more credulity than the rest of the population.

In keeping with Hitler's principle of the "creeping revolution" in all fields, the Reich Youth leadership was at pains to carry out the transition as imperceptibly as possible. The organization, style of activity and leadership principle of the Hitler Youth, as well as the travels, camps, uniforms and communal evenings, were in any case derived from the *Bunde*; the Hitler Youth was able to take over unchanged the songs, the rituals and a certain background ideological consciousness in order only later and piecemeal to adapt them in detail to its own aims. pp 346-347

To a degree hitherto unknown, young people were able to satisfy their spontaneous urge towards involvement, activity and demonstration of their worth. The National Socialist regime seemed to provide what they longed for: "To throw oneself into a cause, to take responsibility for one's contemporaries, to be able to work for an even stronger Fatherland in unison with equally enthusiastic comrades," as one of its members wrote, looking back. pp 347-348



With a barely concealed consistency the organized young were brought up as 'material' for the regime's plans for future expansion and taken into account in calculations of relative strength in considering foreign policy. Incapable, because of their whole apolitical education, of discerning the motives behind the measures adopted by the state, young people saw them only in the context of their own needs; even the ideological training, the 'service' activities, or the organization of the Hitler Youth in structures taken over from the Wehrmacht, they saw for the most part only as concessions on the part of the leadership to young people's urge towards play and adventure, and naively interpreted as an appeal to a universal idealism what in fact served concrete aims of power politics. pp 348-349

The object of the education programme was no more and no less than "one day to obtain the generation that is ripe for the last and greatest decisions on this globe." As Hitler stated:

"My pedagogy is hard. The weak must be hammered away. In my castle of the Teutonic Order a youth will grow up before which the world will tremble. I want a violent, domineering, undismayed, cruel youth. Youth must be all that. It must bear pain. There must be nothing weak and gentle about it. The free, splendid beast of prey must once more flash from its eyes. I want my youth strong and beautiful. In this way I can create the new."

There was a marked 'literary' flavour about such early utterances by Hitler, and the regime's education policy reflected this only in so far as these visions could be combined with the rigid theme of domination. The "free, splendid beast of prey" was in reality a domesticated variety trained to react as required. p 351

At the beginning of 1943 Hitler remarked to Goring that he felt “a vague distrust” of Schirach. When the former Reich Youth Leader organised an exhibition in Vienna at about this time, in which works of ‘degenerate art’ were included, Hitler felt challenged on his most intimate ground and accused him of “leading the cultural opposition against him in Germany.” This excited outburst did not accurately describe either Schirach’s real position or the direction and extent of his efforts. A few weeks later, during a visit to the Berghof, Schirach urged a more moderate policy towards the Russian peoples and, with the assistance of his wife, tried to draw Hitler’s attention to the barbaric conditions of the deportation of the Jews, provoking a clash which led to the couple’s premature departure. From this point on he found himself isolated, and if his subsequent statement that he had expected to be arrested and charged before the People’s Court was probably simply self-dramatization, it is nevertheless true, as he claimed, that after the controversy at the Berghof he was “politically a dead man.”

p 352

GENERAL VON X: BEHAVIOUR AND ROLE OF THE OFFICER CORPS IN THE THIRD REICH

In February 1933 Reichenau, who by virtue of his personality was soon to become a crucial figure in the Reichswehr’s policy-making at that period, told a council of commanding officers, according to the notes of one of those present:

“We must recognize that we are in the midst of a revolution. What is rotten in the state must fall and it can only be brought down by terror. The party will proceed ruthlessly against Marxism. The Army’s task is to order arms. No succour if any of the persecuted seek refuge with the troops.”

This dishonourable injunction which aroused “great dismay” but significantly only one voice of protest, governed the actions of the Reichswehr leaders during the coming months. They stood aside with ordered arms while the Constitution was eroded piecemeal, the *Lander* overcome, the parties and political organizations suppressed, minorities persecuted, opponents of the regime arrested, maltreated or murdered, and justice and the law eliminated. They did so not under the pressure of external circumstances, nor from duty to their oath of obedience, which did not disintegrate until later, nor, finally, in obedience to traditional ways of thinking, which Reichenau’s above-quoted speech violently contradicted. Their attitude was a deliberate political decision. And the Army leaders did not stir when Hitler sent out his murder squads on a three-day massacre in the Rohm affair.

p 360

Non-intervention finally became a synonym for the renunciation of integrity and all moral claims, and with his unflinching nose for power relationships Hitler immediately discerned the underlying confession of weakness. When, immediately after Hindenburg’s death at the beginning of August 1933, Blomberg and Reichenau rather overhurriedly compelled the Army to take an oath of unconditional obedience to the “Führer of the German Reich and nation, Adolf Hitler, the Supreme Commander of the Wehrmacht”, this was not so much, as has frequently been suggested, the beginning of a disastrous entanglement, but more accurately its first conclusive climax.

p 361

At one blow, with not one hint of resistance, Hitler had eliminated the last power centre of any significance and, along with the whole civilian power, now held the military in his hand. Contemptuously he commented that he now knew all generals were cowards. p 365

Elements of Hitler's belligerent policy, which till then had been thoughtlessly disregarded or simply overlooked, crystallized more and more into concrete fears. It may be taken as certain that the majority of the top-ranking officers were entirely critical of his hazardous plans for the future and by no means approved of a course that was leading towards war, though naturally not so much out of moral considerations as on the basis of a sober evaluation of the relative strength of the armed forces concerned. But a complicated system of assurances and self-deceptions again and again dissipated their objections and they got around their "worried presentiment of his liability to disaster" . . .

As early as January 1937 Ludwig Beck, the Chief of the General Staff, wrote to his superior, General von Fritsch:

"The Wehrmacht enjoys among our military-minded nation almost unlimited trust. The responsibility for what is to come rests almost exclusively with the Army. There is no avoiding this fact".

From his position Beck did indeed do everything to thwart or at least delay Hitler's plans, without achieving anything to begin with but his own dismissal. "What is the dog making of our beautiful Germany!" he exclaimed at the time, and only slowly, with endless pangs of conscience, did he come to approve a project for a coup d'etat again and again discussed and planned within a restricted circle. . . .

Respect for the now purely formal authority of the oath of obedience remained insurmountable. The realization that Hitler had long since forfeited any claim on that oath and that an assassination had become a necessity could never break down that last emotional barrier; what he was planning appeared to him as mutiny and revolution, words which, as he himself said in a discussion with Halder, "do not exist in the dictionary of a German soldier." In this sense, right up to the end, he saw the day he took an oath to Hitler as the "blackest day" of his life. . . .

Accustomed as they were to suppress their individuality and to deny all contradictions, all feelings, especially those of revolt against an established order, as captious arrogance, since there was "no room for sentiment here," the officers' doubts of the dictator's right to rule constantly reverted to doubt of their right to doubt. . . .

In this last resort it must also have been that lack of resolution in setting about a task which ran counter to everything all of them had been brought up to believe in, that turned all these obsessional, split-natured, endlessly arguing conspirators, inextricably entangled in their reasons and counter-reasons, into modern Hamlets. pp 365-367

By bowing, often against their better judgement, to Hitler's orders as dictated by the whim of the moment, they themselves fostered the process of loss of power which

began with the planning of the French campaign before Dunkirk, reached its climax with the dismissal of Brauchitsch and the battle of Stalingrad, and concluded after 20 July 1944 with the appointment of Himmler as Commander in Chief of the Replacement Army. It was this same feeble readiness to collaborate, even at the price of self-compromise, that finally entangled a considerable number of them in the regime's injustices and its extermination programme. pp 369-370

'PROFESSOR NSDAP': THE INTELLECTUALS AND NATIONAL SOCIALISM

It was by no means only those names established as 'folk,' 'nationalist,' 'conservative' or 'authoritarian' who expressed their expectations in the same high-flown terms as Hans Friedrich Blunck, who proclaimed [in 1933] "Humility before God, honour to the Reich, the golden age of the arts." As early as 3 March three hundred university teachers of all political persuasions declared themselves for Hitler in an election appeal, while the mass of students had gone over to the National Socialist camp considerably earlier. As early as 1931 the party, with 50 to 60 per cent of the votes, enjoyed almost twice as much support in the universities as in the country as a whole. The dominant influence of rightist tendencies was as evident in the teaching staff as in the self-governing student body, which was largely controlled by the Union of National Socialist German Students. . . .

In May 1933 a collective declaration of support for the new regime was made by the professors. This was accompanied by a welter of individual expressions of approval, some of them linked with concrete demands, such as those advanced by the well-known cultural sociologist Hans Freyer, who wanted the universities to become more political in keeping with the new spirit. On the eve of the popular elections of 12 November well-known scholars and scientists like Pinder, Sauerbruch and Heidegger called for an understanding attitude towards Hitler's policies. pp 381-382

The aim of this first period was defined by Reich Minister Frick in the words: "An end must be put once and for all to this spirit of subversion that has gnawed for long enough at Germany's heart." Chief among the measures adopted to this end were the mass introduction of new professors into the universities, the suppression of unwanted artists by forcibly preventing them from working and legally banning their work, and the most spectacular gesture of resolute hostility to the intellect: the burning of some 20,000 so-called un-German writings in the public squares of German university towns to the accompaniment of SA and SS bands playing 'patriotic airs.' . . .

Side by side with this, writers and artists were harassed and subjected to regulations that systematized the random interferences of the first phase. The victims, gradually realizing what was happening to them, had no authority before which to state their case save their own secret diaries. Within those weeks no fewer than 250 writers left Germany, giving the cue for a process of unparalleled cultural wastage whose after-effects can still be felt. Others withdrew and fell silent out of disgust and helpless anger. But no gesture of indignation, of joint self-assertion, could be observed, and consequently whatever resistance was offered went unnoticed by those who found

themselves put to the test individually and looked about for examples of how to act.
p 383

What took the place of the banned works, in spite of all the verbose embellishments, was nothing more than a projection of the artistic prejudices of the German nationalist man in the street, who now saw his intellectual backwardness and cultural narrow-mindedness sanctioned by the state itself as healthy common sense. p 385

What was revealed during those years was more than a mistake, and that “unforgettable failure fatal to the honour of the German mind,” of which Thomas Mann spoke, was more than the result of a brief state of intoxication brought about by hands with the power to mislead. The weakness of the intellectual will to assert itself is comprehensible only on the basis of a prolonged corruption of all politico-moral values. To be sure, here too only a minority consistently followed National Socialism and its leadership; above all, the later evolution of the regime sobered many who had experienced exalted emotions at the beginning. And it was just this refusal of lasting adherence that aroused Hitler’s reiterated rancour against the “intellectual classes.” He declared in his speech to the German press on 10 November 1938: “Unfortunately we need them; otherwise we might one day, I don't know, exterminate them or something like that. But unfortunately we need them.” p 391

GERMAN WIFE AND MOTHER: THE ROLE OF WOMEN IN THE THIRD REICH

The National Socialist movement, from the beginning a militant community of like-minded men, had almost no place in its ranks for women. The very first general meeting of members early in 1921 passed a unanimous resolution that “a woman can never be accepted into the leadership of the party and into the governing committee.”

In the idea of a carefully fostered elite and hierarchy, particularly in the SA and later in the SS, in the ecstatic admiration for the “indomitable leader,” the “heroic friend” and the “self-sacrificing comrade” we see a repeated tendency to homosexuality also revealed in the soft, vaguely sentimental tone used to embellish acts of brutality.
p 397

In just the same way that skilful stage-management perverted political demonstrations into purely instinctual processes by the use of subtle stimuli, so Hitler visibly degenerated from an orator in the true sense to an impulse-object before whom the neurotic petty bourgeoisie gathered for collective debauch, waiting lustfully for the moment of escape from all inhibitions, of the great release, when the crowd’s yell strikingly revealed the pleasurable character of these proceedings and their resemblance to the public sexual acts of primitive tribes. Hitler himself declared that in his speeches he had “systematically adapted himself to the taste of women,” who from the beginning had been “among his most enthusiastic admirers;” and even during the war he tried to counter moods of criticism with rhetorical arguments “addressed above all to the female mind.” p 401

Starting from the conviction that the German people lacked “the great, strong, purposeful woman such as the Romans possessed in their Vestals and the Teutons in

their Wise Women”, he [Himmler] proposed to gather together in schools a politically, biologically and intellectually selected elite of young women. After an education that was to extend from courses in cooking and housecraft through sport and revolver-shooting to the basic rules of the Foreign Service they would be given the title ‘High Woman.’ It was Hitler’s idea that they should first of all replace “the wives of most of our National Socialist leaders,” who were merely “good, trusty housewives who were entirely in place during the time of struggle but no longer suit their husbands today.” Such systematic coupling of people of high value to form “National Socialist model marriages,” Himmler enthused, “is a unique phenomenon and can be the basis for a new advance of the Germanic race.”

The enlightenment of the public on all these projects, however, as Bormann urged, should “for obvious reasons not begin until after the war.” p 413

Most of all this remained at the project stage in the blood cult of the fanatical planners. The ideological concepts of National Socialism still give off an almost palpable effluvium, an obscene odour of ideological poverty. The view of woman as never more than an object of ambitious struggle for political power becomes nakedly clear in the plans to multiply the Germanic race. . . .

The degradation of woman under Hitler and National Socialism was never fully appreciated by contemporary public opinion, corrupted as it was with the help of popular measures designed to foster the regime’s plans; even today its extent has not been fully recognized. It was surely a reflection of this degradation, intensified by the conditions of private life, that of the six woman who were close to Hitler in the course of his life five committed or attempted suicide. p 414

RUDOLF HOSS: THE MAN FROM THE CROWD



In Chelmno, Treblinka and Auschwitz there perished both the last remnants of an optimistic view of man based on the value of the human personality, and the whole system of logical psychology. The camps brought the discovery that there was “an absolute evil which could no longer be understood and explained by the evil motives of self-interest, greed, covetousness, resentment, lust for power and cowardice; and which therefore anger could not avenge, love could not endure, friendship could not forgive.” [Hannah Arendt] p 415

There are limits to the numbers that can be killed by hate, brutality or blood lust. To an industrially organized death factory, such as was perfected later, murder is limited solely by technical capacity. What happened in the extermination camps of the Third Reich is therefore not to be adequately explained in terms of the mobilization of destructive and criminal energies. The new, disturbing experience lay precisely in the fact that it did not need such means and impulses. It was the appeal to idealism, to the readiness for self-sacrifice to a historic mission, and the perpetually reawakened devotion to a utopian world which placed at the regime’s disposal those forces without whose willingness to serve, self-discipline and sense of duty neither the

proportions nor the cold perfectionism of the extermination system would have been possible. pp 415-416

If life had led him upon a different path, he might have handled dossiers or run the firm that he dreamt of with the same reliability with which in the end he murdered human beings by the hundred thousand. Rudolf Hoss was the commandant of the concentration and extermination camp of Auschwitz. p 418

In the type represented by Hoss evil takes the shape of the uninvolved book-keeper, pedantic, sober, accurate. Hate, he states, had always been alien to him, and in later sections of his autobiography when he repeatedly complains of his vain struggles with malicious, rough subordinates, there is no hint of retrospective self-justification. The man who attached so much importance to his bourgeois 'decency,' who proclaimed his aversion from his comrades' alcoholic excesses, who stated that he had never personally hated the Jews and had repudiated the anti-Semitic paper *Der Sturmer* because it was "calculated to appeal to the basest instincts," precisely because of all this succeeded in becoming the 'ideal type' of Himmler's camp commandant, since any subjective impulse, from sadism to pity, would have disturbed the smooth functioning of the mechanism of extermination. p 420

Asked whether he was convinced of the guilt of the murdered Jews, he said the question was unrealistic, "he had really never wasted much thought on it." Far from his being tormented by the despairing screams of men dying in agony, the process was finally reduced to an administrative problem: a question of timetable conferences to arrange the smooth transport of human loads, a question of types of oven, gassing capacities, and "potentialities of fuel technology." It was precisely this mechanization of the process of extermination which allowed him later to deny all personal responsibility and, what is so horrifying to the observer, to argue from the fact that he murdered without any personal emotion that he was free from guilt. p 428

A great deal remained inexplicable to Rudolf Hoss. Although in his statements he later admitted the criminal nature of his work, he seems never to have quite realized who he was and what his name meant in connection with the name of Auschwitz. It is impossible to avoid the suspicion that even in admitting his guilt he was merely making a final effort to obey, this time the investigating officials and the court, who now condemned organized genocide and whom, "always in accordance with orders," he wished to please by repudiating his own actions. The American court psychologist G.M. Gilbert, from a conversation with Hoss, gained the impression that the former commandant of Auschwitz "would never have become aware of the monstrous nature of his crime if someone had not pointed it out to him." pp 430-431

PART FOUR

THE FACE OF THE THIRD REICH: ATTEMPT AT A SUMMING UP

National Socialism, as we have seen, was not a self-enclosed will to power exclusively determined by the individual desires of its spokesmen; it did undoubtedly

contain a utopian element. “Gods and beasts, that is what our world is made of,” Hitler once exclaimed in one of his confidential disquisitions on the philosophy of power to his closest followers. This lapidary sentence is probably the most succinct possible summary of the essence of National Socialism, behind all ideological and tactical masks. It points to the foundations of its claim to govern, its image of man, its racial and expansionist aims, and the ultimate ground from which the manifold ideological elements evolved. p 436

Every totalitarian government starts from a new image of man; this, by definition, is what distinguishes it from the classical form of coercive government. Its revolutionary claims are not aimed solely at the reconstruction of the state; it not only prescribes new laws, demands new principles of order or new forms of mutual relationships, but also calls for a ‘new man.’ Unlike the great revolutions of past ages, it sets out to change not things but people, not structures but life itself: this is precisely what identifies it as totalitarian. Nothing demonstrates, in this strict sense, the totalitarian character of the Third Reich more unequivocally than the measures consistently taken on all social planes to mould a new human type, the creation of which National Socialism described as “the task of the twentieth century.” pp 436-437

It was the greatness of the movement, Hitler proclaimed on one occasion, that “sixty thousand men have outwardly become almost a unit, that actually these men are uniform not only in ideas, but that even the facial expression is almost the same. Look at these laughing eyes, this fanatical enthusiasm, and you will discover how a hundred thousand men in a movement become a single type.” Hitler saw the situation they were striving for, in which the whole nation would correspond to this image as the result of a long biological and educational process. In his secret speech to the officers’ passing out class of 1939 he spoke of a development extending over a hundred years, at the end of which a majority would possess those elite characteristics with whose aid the world could be conquered and ruled. “Those who see in National Socialism nothing more than a political movement know scarcely anything of it,” he said on another occasion. “It is more even than a religion: it is the will to create mankind anew.” p 438

Apart from the acutely neurotic personalities of almost all the leading National Socialists which we have seen in the course of the present study, a large proportion were also sick in the narrower clinical sense, including Goebbels, Goring, Ley, Himmler, and not least Hitler himself. Hitler got over such obvious discrepancies with the fiction that racial values showed not so much in outward appearances as in reactions to the National Socialist idea and its Fuhrer, undisturbed by the fact that this amounted to a denial of the whole racial theory. This, he proclaimed, “is the infallible method of seeking the men one wants to find, for everyone listens only to the sound to which his innermost being is attuned.” pp 440-441

The decisive distinguishing feature during the early phase of the movement was the almost total lack of qualifications for joining. The very fact that they possessed nothing, no ties, no traditionally determined reservations of respect, no ‘origins’, no support of family, religious or moral ties, and even refused to accept convention and morality in a total, nihilistic purification of existence, made them in part the material,

in part the spokesmen of totalitarian aspirations. Lack of habitual attitudes was their essential attitude, and with it went the readiness to use force and take 'direct action.'

This combination of lack of ties and belief in force, which can be demonstrated in all the exponents of the National Socialist movement, is not merely among the most important conditions for Hitler's rise but is no doubt the crucial symptom of all pre-totalitarian phases. What came to light here, amid the breakdown of a traditional order, was the Machiavellianism of the little man who no longer acknowledged his responsibility to any authority for his words and actions. pp 442-443

Until shortly before his death, even from the cell of his underground bunker system, Hitler was able to compel the strictest obedience. The members of his closest circle had to purchase their position at the cost of a thousand insults, constant sacrifice of their honour, and anyone still capable of a stab of indignation hid it even from himself, like Goebbels, with the formula that it was the greatest good fortune of a contemporary to serve a genius. What is again and again manifest among the figures surrounding Hitler is an empty but dogged will to power, which is so often combined with extreme servility. p 445

Where Hitler did not simply punish opposition by expulsion or liquidation, as in the case of Gregor Strasser or Ernst Rohm, he adopted in varying degrees a demonstrative indifference or refusal of access to his presence. The effects of such measures can be seen, for example, in the cases of Rosenberg, Frank or Ribbentrop, of whose suffering and despair when they were no longer praised, esteemed or consulted by Hitler enough is known to make it clear that the character of Hitler's compulsive power over men's minds can only be understood in religious terms. It is reported of Himmler, Goring and Ribbentrop that after outbursts of criticism from Hitler they became so ill that they had to retire to bed, and when Frank exclaimed, "Our constitution is the will of the Fuhrer," this was undoubtedly also true in the physiological sense as well. The lack of independence and poverty of personality of so many of his leading supporters was a prime means of preserving an attachment to Hitler's person through all humiliations, and a general search for a father figure found its deepest satisfaction in the consciousness of Hitler's close presence. pp 445-446

The purposes of the leadership, Hitler commented, must "never burden the thoughts of the simple party comrade," and he spoke of the "quite special secret pleasure of seeing how the people around us fail to realize what is really happening to them." The new social order, which he announced to the initiates, envisaged four classes: the National Socialist high aristocracy "tempered by battle"; then the hierarchy of party members forming "the new middle class"; then "the great mass of the anonymous, the serving collective, the eternally disfranchised"; and finally "the class of subject alien races; we need not hesitate to call them the modern slave class." p 447

Contrary to the widespread idea that the power structures of totalitarian systems are monolithically compact, they are for the most part structurally chaotic. Behind the facade of conspiratorial solidarity they seethe with rivalries, hostilities, intrigues, as previous chapters of this book have amply demonstrated. The basic feeling of insecurity, especially in the higher ranks, drives each individual to basically futile

efforts to secure his own position, efforts that are not merely tolerated but actually fostered by the top leadership. . . .

In the savage struggles for power before Hitler's throne everyone was at some time or other against everyone: Goring against Goebbels, Goebbels against Rosenberg, Rosenberg against Ley (he is out "to cheat me of my life's work behind my back"). And Bormann, Bormann against Frank, Frank against Himmler, and all against all. The constant and often grotesque feuds over authority within the field of foreign policy or propaganda clearly show the results of this 'multi-Caesarism.' Charles Dubost, the deputy chief prosecuting counsel at Nuremberg, was reminded of "the minor courts of the Italian Renaissance." pp 452-453

The National Socialist leaders were fundamentally nothing more than particularly well-marked examples of a type that was to be met throughout society, and in this sense the face of the Third Reich was the face of a whole nation. For it is never the artist with the gold paint but always the worshipper who makes the idol. p 455

A long and wretched tradition of German intellectual history, which managed to assert itself alongside humane developments and finally against them, ended in that phenomenon which we call National Socialism. Whole generations of university teachers, literary pseudo-prophets and presidents of nationalist societies helped to create the atmosphere in which hostility to reason, brutalization of life and corruption of ethical standards required only to be crystallized in a political outlook and expressed by an eloquent speaker in order to unfold their destructive violence.

Hitler is now forgotten and the sterile philosophy with which he caused such turmoil has perished with him. Even the traces of his rule now terrify only a few. pp 456-457

